

HOLLOW WORLD™

Official D&D®
Game Adventure

NIGHTSTORM

by Allen Varney



D & D Game

TSR, Inc.

GREATER COLIMA

(Chapter 1)

Population: 1038. All are 0-level NORMAL people unless otherwise noted.

Adjacent village: This small settlement, built before this town, has 104 people. It is depicted in HWA2, *Nightrage*. Aloof, class-conscious relationship between the twin communities.

ECONOMY: Barter only. Subsistence agriculture (wheat, rye, fruit, cattle, fishing); stonecarving; some trade with merchants from Merry Pirate Isles. Periodic episodes of nomadic wandering (not due for another generation).

Beliefs: Ancestral Stonecarver culture holds that carving huge statue from cliffside will guard the villagers' trail once they leave the area. Statue site lies a mile to the west, depicted in HWA2.

GOVERNMENT: Occasional town meetings in marketplace, otherwise none. Rashan Twinchisel, oldest citizen (see HWA2), exercises informal authority.

KEY

See map on back of screen.

Stone Valley: Lies between isolated mesas; overall terrain beyond the valley is clear grassland with occasional foothills of the Aztlan Mountains. Steep cliffs to either side of the valley, 100' high in places.

Houses: Wood and stone construction. Many have gardens; all have privies. Most show damage from pirate raids.

1. **Boarding house:** "Ratim's Rest," large two-story house with attached stable and wagon yard. Ratim (F1, 4 hp, AL L) lives on lower floor with his small family; up to six boarders reside in rooms on upper floor, rented by the month (costs equivalent of 4 sp). Renters are often journeyman tradesmen, such as barbers, carpenters, woodcutters, etc.; some stay for years. Ratim keeps bees in hives behind house.

2. **Potter:** Kala (3 hp, AL L) is a small, burly woman, aged 45; her husband, Tomor, works at Ratim's Rest. Two young apprentices. Exceptionally fine work.

3. **Smithy:** Once a medium-sized, well equipped blacksmith's forge and workshop, run by Pratey the Smith (F2, 6 hp, AL N) and his large family. Destroyed in recent pirate raid. (Smithy in adjacent village still stands, protected by the *Spell of Preservation*, see HWA2.)

4. **Fruit orchard:** Apples, pears, cherries. Run by Amar Hetixo, baker and undertaker, richest man in town. Large farm nearby is home to Hetixo and three families who work for him. Its irrigation canals, which lower the Stonecrop's level, rouse the Colimans' anger.

5. **Hetixo's bakery:** Managed by his cousin, Tealain.

6. **Handyman:** Domindal Reyt (secretly F4, 12 hp, AL L), makes brooms, candles, soap, leatherwork, rope, wheels. Solitary, respected but not liked. Claims to come from Corescos in Tralbar Kingdoms. Secretly a retired first mate from a Merry Pirate ship; hated pirates' ruthlessness. Could be recruited for PC party if his secret came out.

7. **Carpenter:** Junn Silkin (F1, 5 hp, AL N). Also woodcutter, furniture maker, etc. Single, antisocial. Rules his two apprentices like a tyrant.

8. **Mill.** Communally owned and maintained, providing meal and flour for the entire village.

9. **Slaughterhouse and Tannery.** Malodorous, especially foul in hot, dry weather with a slight wind.

10. **Town drunk:** Golbun, 40-year-old bachelor. Knows Barki well and can guide PCs to her (see Chapter 1). Has strange dreams filled with prophecies (all false).

HOLLOW WORLD™

An Official DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® Game Supplement

NIGHTSTORM

by Allen Varney

Part Three of the *Blood Brethren* Trilogy

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INTRODUCTION

Nightstorm is the third module in the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® *Blood Brethren* adventure trilogy in the HOLLOW WORLD™ campaign setting. To use this adventure, you need the D&D® Basic, Expert, and Companion sets and the HOLLOW WORLD™ boxed set.

This series began in module HWA1, *Nightwail*, and it continued in HWA2, *Nightrage*. However, within broad limits the three modules can be played in any order. Though part of a series, this adventure can stand independently with some adaptation. If you are playing this module alone, see the lead-in description in the next section, "Adventure Overview."

Nightstorm works best for a party of four to six player characters (PCs), levels 8-10. Everything that follows is for the Dungeon Master's eyes only. Players should stop reading here.

Preparing the Adventure

In HWA1, the PCs' quest began in the outer world and led them to the Hollow World. (Though nominally beginning in the D&D Known World, this trilogy adapts easily to any existing campaign setting.) This part of the adventure takes place entirely in the Hollow World; if you play it alone, you can even use PCs native to the Hollow World, according to the guidelines given in the boxed set. In this module, native PCs could plausibly be Merry Pirates, or perhaps Azcan prisoners of the pirates. During the adventure, new PCs might come from the new land introduced in this module, Shahjapur.

Because this module ranges across 3,000 miles of the Hollow World and through a complex storyline, read all of the text before starting play. Also, it helps to familiarize yourself with the following sections from the HOLLOW WORLD™ DM's Sourcebook: the Atlas entry on the Merry Pirates, and the Immortals section, particularly the entries for Thanatos and Asterius.

About the Text

The adventure's plot is described in a sequence of chapters, each keyed to a single setting or idea. The chapters are summarized in the following Adventure Overview. Most of the chapters contain the following entries.

How They Get Here: Ways the PCs can reach this place, including a list of clues from other chapters that point here.

The Scene: General physical description.

Investigation: The paths the players can take to find clues leading them further into the adventure.

Events: Occurrences that may happen with the PCs present. Some are optional, some mandatory.

Where Next?: This entry summarizes the chapter's clues and the places they lead. Just as important, it summarizes the facts that you *must* convey to the players before the PCs leave this area.

Staging Hints: From time to time, the adventure

offers notes on how to stage a scene—that is, how to pace it, create an appropriate mood, and produce certain dramatic effects. Use this advice to create a vivid, memorable adventure for the players.

Not every chapter has all of these entries; some chapters contain extra entries not listed here. Characters and events described in a chapter can appear in various orders, and your storyline may depart from the default sequence this module assumes.

Any text in a box should be read or paraphrased for the players. All other information is for you alone. Reveal it only in response to PC actions.

THACO: In statistic listings, this stands for "To Hit Armor Class 0." Subtract the target's AC from this number to get the roll needed to hit.

Ability checks: The adventure sometimes calls for PCs to make an ability check. Roll 1d20 and compare the result to the character's appropriate ability (Strength, Dexterity, etc.). If the roll is equal to or less than the ability score, the action succeeds. If the roll is greater than the ability score, the action fails.

DM Note: A correction to the module screen of HWA1, *Nightwail*—replace references to "No-marys volcano" with "the Nithian Empire."

ADVENTURE OVERVIEW

As outlined at the beginning of *Nightwail*, this trilogy details a plot by the Entropy Immortal Thanatos to corrupt the Hollow World and parts of the outer world. He has set in motion several schemes—in the Azcan Empire, the Nithian Empire, and, far overseas, the land of Shahjapur (a new culture introduced in this module).

The previous adventures described the Azcan and Nithian portions of the plan: the first, a scheme to corrupt the magical energy that pours from the central sun; and the second, an elaborate plot to tunnel the anti-magical *World-Shield*, allowing the corrupted energy to beam outward through the world's crust and affect the Known World as well.

This module details the third vital element of the conspiracy: the means by which Thanatos keeps the other Immortals from interfering with his plan.

THE DECOYED IMMORTALS

As detailed in HWA1, Thanatos has staged a clever ruse to divert almost all the world's Immortals into the distant past. When they left, the Immortals set up a magical "time marker" to mark the instant of their departure. The marker, a standard but trivial convenience, would tell the returning Immortals where to re-enter the timestream.

The Immortals had no reason to suspect Thanatos's treachery; after all, he sent a simulacrum of himself with them on their journey. After their departure, he quickly neutralized the sole remaining Immortal guardian, the relatively young Asterius. Then Thanatos cast an enchantment on the time marker, slowing the passage of time around it. Then he removed the

marker to the Temple of Eight Sweet Winds in Shahjapur, and he set guardians over it: ruthless Shahjapuri assassins called the Kirtanta, and the transformed Ghantrian minister Irila Kaze (see HWA1).

In this way Thanatos has delayed the Immortals' return for some months. Therefore, for the duration of this adventure, **no clerical spells above 2nd level are available!** The only exception applies to clerics of Thanatos himself, including Simm of the Blood Brethren (and chief villain of HWA1.)

Clerics can cast 1st and 2nd level spells as usual, but higher-level spells are granted by their patron Immortals, and the Immortals won't return until the end of this module.

Asterius: One Immortal, Asterius, has remained in the present—but Thanatos captured him and has imprisoned him in Shahjapur, using a powerful device called a *vampire sheath*. Asterius sent out a fraction of his awareness to rescue the PCs in HWA1, for he recognized that as outsiders in the Hollow World they would have the best chance of freeing him. In this adventure, he can do no more than send them a few enigmatic dreams.

Optionally, you may decide that Asterius (substituting for the PCs' patron Immortals) grants PC clerics spells higher than 2nd level. However, only PCs gain this advantage; NPC clerics still cannot cast high-level spells. Note that PC clerics have no clue why this should be!

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

The adventure begins near Atacalpa, the ruins described in Chapter 6 of *Nightwail* as the PCs' arrival point in the Hollow World. Chapter 1 offers alternate beginnings according to the PCs' whereabouts at the ends of the other modules in this trilogy. In most cases the PCs find their way to the coastal town of Colima. Clues there send them across the Northern Atlasic Ocean and into the adventure. The action proceeds with the following chapters:

Chapter 1, *Getting There*: The PCs must make their way from their current Hollow World location across hundreds of miles of ocean to Shahjapur.

Chapter 2, *A Chain of Dreams*: En route to Shahjapur, the PCs experience strange dreams, sendings from the Immortal Asterius—and from Thanatos. The dreams first provide clues and a goal, then danger.

Chapter 3, *Shahjapur*: An overview in the style of the *Hollow World Atlas*. This new culture is inspired by India during the 16th-century Moghal period (with borrowing from other periods).

Chapter 4, *Dharsatra*: An overview of the largest city in Shahjapur, a crowded metropolis mixing incredible filth with unearthly beauty. This city is the site of this module's adventure. This chapter also details the evil cult of assassins that hunts the PCs during the module.

Chapter 5, *The Temple of Eight Sweet Winds*: At a beautiful magical monument in Dharsatra, the PCs meet assassins, rescue a holy man named Chatterjee, and learn the next step to their goal. They must

construct a magical symbol, or "yantra," of unknown function and purpose.

Chapter 6, *The Yantra of the Emerald River*: This chapter, a set of mini-scenarios, follows the PCs as they get the various components needed to make the magical symbol.

Chapter 7, *Avatar of Dakka*: Within the most sacred and inaccessible part of the Temple of Eight Sweet Winds, the PCs must make the yantra while fending off attack from a monstrous servant of Thanatos. (**Important note:** If you intend to play the other parts of this trilogy but have not done so, the Shahjapur section of the adventure ends here. The PCs *must* play out the other two modules now, before the yantra's magic activates and sends them to the climax of the trilogy).

Chapter 8, *Emerald River*: The yantra sends the PCs into the time-stream, where they try to rescue Asterius, alert the other Immortals to return to the present, and face the Immortal might of Thanatos himself.

Chapter 9, *The Hollow Promise*: The PCs and the Immortals decide the fate of the Hollow World.

Chapter 10, *Aftermath*: Wrapping up loose ends from this and the other two modules.

FOR NEW PLAYERS

If you are playing this module alone, or as the first in the series, use one of the following openings for this adventure. If you have already played *Nightwail* or *Nightrage*, skip this section and go to Chapter 1.

If the PCs are already in the Hollow World: In an encounter with the ruler of some powerful nation, preferably the Azcan Empire, the PCs learn that a small but valuable caravan has vanished in transit between cities. The ruler may ask the PCs to locate it as a favor, or order them to find it on pain of death.

The trail leads to the western coast of the Azcan Empire, across the Aztlan Mountains to the ruins of Atacalpa, and then to the port town of Colima. At some point on the journey, the characters realize that all clerical spells above 2nd level are gone, and so, inexplicably, are the Immortals. Go to Chapter 1.

If the PCs begin in the outer world: At the end of an adventure, preferably when the PCs are away from help, the party's clerics wake up one morning to realize they have not received spells above 2nd level. Prayers to patron entities go unanswered. A few days later, a human figure materializes before them in a blinding flash.

This is Dantello, a 7th level thief from some likely city near the PCs' current location. Dantello, an adventurer of rather amoral tendencies, has already journeyed into the Hollow World with a band of explorers.

How did Dantello's party reach the Hollow World? He summarizes events that closely resemble "That Sinking Feeling," the first scenario in the *HOLLOW WORLD™* boxed set's Adventure Book. When his ship, the *Sea-Gallop*, was swept into the whirlpool near the Ierendi Islands, the party's wizards and most

of their magical items were swept overboard. The remaining adventurers had no choice but to ride out the long journey into the Hollow World.

Once there, Dantello's party fared well. . . until they encountered Irila Kaze. Dantello says:

"We'd made our way as far as this little port town—Colima, they call it. Right away I spotted this Kaze woman in the market square; those Glantrian robes she wore made her stand out like a frost giant. Then I saw she was carrying a gold statuette. So I fetched it."

Dantello shows a small statuette of curious make. (PCs who have been to Sind recognize it as the ornate, highly stylized Sindian manner.) The statuette depicts an ugly woman with eight arms, wild hair, and many weapons. She stands in what looks like a ceremonial pose, like a dancer.

Dantello continues, "Only trouble was, Kaze caught me. What a grip she had, for such an old biddy! My friends rushed in to save me. What's that saying, about fools rushing in? They got her to turn me loose, but then she fried them with magic like I've never seen. What a slaughter! I'd be one more body among my friends, but that I found this secret."

Dantello turns the statuette upside down and reveals a secret compartment in the base. He pulls out several magical items called *pendants of many tongues*, one pendant for each PC. These let the PCs speak and understand the Hollow World's many languages (but not written words).

Dantello's party perished less than an hour ago, in battle with Irila Kaze. Only Dantello escaped, using a device of Immortal magic that he found inside the statuette: a *jump rod*.

Thanatos gave the *jump rod* to Irila Kaze and the Brethren to let them travel between the Known and Hollow Worlds. (He also provided the *pendants*.) The finger-length silver rod originally had three black gems inlaid in the handle. Now there is only one left. Each gem represented a charge for the item, and allowed the user and his companions to *teleport* between the worlds. (Immortal magic can circumvent the restrictions of the *Spell of Preservation*.)

Kaze and the Brethren used one charge to reach the Hollow World. Dantello used the second to escape, but since he was unfamiliar with the device, he ended up where the PCs are. The remaining charge must carry Dantello and the PCs to the Hollow World. The thief explains:

"I thought this would be a routine job. But some of the things that Kaze woman said during the battle keep sticking in my mind. She said, 'Fools'—see, she's one of those types that calls people 'fools,' and that's a bad sign already—'Fools,' she says, 'how can you hope to fight us, when we have beaten the Immortals themselves?'"

"Now, I didn't see anyone else there with her, so I don't know who she meant with 'we.' But our cleric—Father Barg, rest his spirit!—he'd been saying he hadn't felt the presence of his patron, Tarastia, for days now."

This jibes with PC clerics' experience as well. This alone may make the PCs volunteer to go with Dantello to the Hollow World; if not, he asks for their help, saying, "This Kaze is wrapped in something too big for me. I need help, and I need it fast! Join me!"

To encourage the PCs to join him on the trip, Dantello gives them the *pendants of many tongues*. He tells them about the Hollow World's obvious features, such as its central sun, dinosaurs, floating continents, and many peoples. He makes it sound exciting! But he isn't aware of the land's restrictions on magic.

When the PCs are ready, Dantello activates the *jump rod's* last charge. After moment of disorientation, the characters reappear on the cliffs above the rocky beaches of the Bay of Colima, west of the Azcan Empire on the Northern Atlas Ocean. Read this aloud:

Your whole idea of the world has changed—expanded. The solid ground you've walked all your lives has turned out no more solid than a nutshell. The world is hollow.

This is a huge spherical cavern in the core of your world, thousands of miles across, with a brilliant red sun floating at its center. You stand on the inside of this sphere, looking out at a horizon that bends upward—at huge islands floating by in the sky—at distant oceans and continents, homes to. . . who knows what? Suddenly you must rethink everything you knew before.

Dantello gasps in pain. The *jump rod* is cursed! A character of non-chaotic alignment who uses the item is horribly struck down a short time later. (Chaotic characters are immune to this curse.) Unless you would like Dantello to remain with the PCs as an NPC advisor, healing or resurrection magic cannot prevent his death. If the PCs have taken the *rod* and jumped to the Hollow World without Dantello, ignore the curse.

Before he dies, Dantello tells the PCs, "Looks like that old biddy did me in after all. The rod must have been cursed. Ah well, not much of a life was left me, I think, if Kaze has managed to pull off what she bragged about. Not much life left for you, either, I'd say."

"Look, we're not far from Colima. If you can get there and find Kaze, maybe you can stop whatever she's doing—succeed where I failed. Get her, get —" He falls dead. The evil *jump rod*, now out of charges, disintegrates.

The mountains beyond the cliffs afford loamy ground suitable for Dantello's burial. Once that is over, clear trails lead down and along the bay to the town of Colima, where the adventure begins in Chapter 1.

This chapter outlines the ways the PCs get into this adventure. It takes the player characters to the port town of Colima, where they can pick up clues that lead them further on the trail of Irila Kaze—the trail that leads to Shahjapur.

HOW THEY GET HERE

Upon Arrival in HWA1

If the PCs are heading this way fresh from their arrival in the Hollow World in HWA1 (Chapter 6, "Emergence"), their suspicions of Irila Kaze are still fresh in their minds—as is the dramatic warning from Asterius.

The Immortal's flaming touch indicated the island of Shahjapur on the bowl-shaped shrine map in the Atacalpa ruins. So the PCs already know the direction they must go, if not the name of their destination; and Colima, 110 miles away, is the most obvious point of departure for that place.

From Atacalpa a slender trail winds through the grass and down the rocky mountainside. Though parts of it betray frequent use (by Azcan scouts spying on Colima), other parts cross such difficult slopes that it seems only goats could traverse them.

Ten miles along, the travellers must inch their way down a narrow cliff trail to a rocky beach. Once down on the shore of the Bay of Colima, the PCs must traverse 40 exhausting miles of watery beach. Then the mountain coast gives way to foothills and gentle beaches of white sand, making the remaining 60 miles to Colima much easier. The trail is clear; there's nowhere else to go.

These mountains, a habitat type known as paramo, feature grassy plains, heavy rainfall, and varied wildlife that is markedly different from the jungles of the Azcan plains. Here the PCs see small herds of vicuna and gigantic flocks of gray finches. They even spot a few ducks, which dote on the paramo's puna grass, lupins, and succulents.

Most wildlife here presents little threat. The spectacled bear, so called because of its white facial markings, roams the foothills, as do a couple of red-winged manticores. These steer clear of any humans or demihumans.

As per the Wilderness Travel rules in the Expert Rulebook, reduce the party's movement to half normal in the mountains, cliffs, and on the rocky beaches. As long as the PCs stay on the trail, there is no chance to get lost. On the gentler beaches, movement increases to the normal rate.

In staging this journey, take the opportunity to introduce new arrivals to the Hollow World's many peculiarities: the eternal noon; the peculiar, more-vivid-than-life colors; and the Floating Continents. (If you intend to play HWA2, refer to Chapter 1 of that module for a foreshadowing encounter with the continent of Ashmorain.)

From the Conclusion of HWA1

If the players have already completed HWA1, the flying boat or a surviving gridbug can fly them down from the wreckage of the Smoking Mirror. The various methods of descent are discussed at the end of HWA1. Once they reach Colima, the vehicle breaks, dies, or disappears.

If you want to skip the next two chapters, the vehicle can take the PCs to Shahjapur itself, or perhaps to a Merry Pirate island close to Shahjapur. On a pirate island you can convey vital clues by running encounters roughly similar to those in this chapter. If the PCs go straight to Shahjapur, they should receive another sending from Asterius, telling them to seek out a holy man named Chatterjee at the Temple of Eight Sweet Winds in Dharsatra. The sending may also pass along the clues about Irila Kaze from this chapter. Go forward with Chapter 3.

From the Conclusion of HWA2

As feathered serpents, the characters can fly down to most any spot in the Hollow World from Ashmorain. The Queen Mother of the feathered serpents can point them in the proper direction for the next step of the quest; perhaps she has received a sending from Asterius that the PCs are not sensitive enough to get.

In this circumstance, the PCs can more easily bypass Colima, since they've already seen it at the start of HWA2. However, make sure the clues below and in Chapter 2 are available in Shahjapur. The serpent PCs can fly directly to Dharsatra; refer to the section above for another sending from Asterius to convey vital exposition, and then continue with Chapter 3.

THE SCENE

As explained in HWA2, Colima was founded by shipwrecked refugees of the Stonecarver culture, a small semi-nomadic tribe that settles in one place for a few generations to carve a huge sculpture, then moves on. Azcan attacks fail because of the town's strong terrain advantage, but Merry Pirate raids fare better. These keep the town on the ragged edge of survival.

Read the following description (taken from HWA2) when the PCs first approach Colima:

As you head down a path by a cliff, the breeze from the bay is fresh and cool. You can see the surf crashing against the beach below you. Then you round an outcropping of rock, and you see the town of Colima.

This is a small port right on the inmost edge of the bay. About two dozen low wooden buildings trail inland between two towering cliffs. Beyond a narrow pass between the cliffs,

more buildings sprawl across a wide valley.

The near cliff is a sheer precipice, separated from the water by a wide gravel beach. But the farther cliff. . . it makes you stop in your tracks and stare.

The rock of the far cliff is being carved into an enormous statue. It hardly looks more than halfway finished—you can see the outlines, but only the lower half shows any detail. It's a figure of a giant man lying curled against the cliff, as though he's sleeping. The workmanship looks primitive.

The head hasn't even been roughed out. As you watch, you see half a dozen small, very small figures of human sculptors walking back and forth across the chest, measuring it by pacing it out. It looks like they've been working on this monument for generations, and it could easily take them generations more to finish it.

The statue is not magical and serves purely as local color. *Nightrage* described the port area of Colima; this module describes the section of the town beyond the pass. (See the map on the module cover.)

INVESTIGATION

This chapter uses the map of the main town of Colima on the module's inside cover. This area lies to the east (i.e., the left) of the original, much smaller village of Colima depicted in HWA2.

If the PCs have not been to Colima before, stage an encounter with a shepherd or other wandering citizen before they enter the town proper. The citizen, bitterly resents the raids and their effect on Colima. The town is kept just on the borderline of starvation from frequent pirate raids; kept just from perishing, without being let to recover more than necessary for brute survival.

The townspeople are peaceful by nature, and they display curiosity about strangers who don't look like Azca or Merry Pirates. When they see the PCs, Colimans are instantly reminded of the last stranger who went through here: Irila Kaze. But they don't have much to say about her; in fact, they seem reluctant to talk about her at all. PCs who ask around are soon referred to the marketplace: "That's where everyone goes when they're looking for something, be it food or stone or information."

How long ago was it?: When did Kaze pass through Colima? That depends on when the PCs arrive.

If you use the "For New Players" sequence in the Introduction, or the players have chosen this path from the PCs' arrival in HWA1, then Irila Kaze was here as recently as three or four sleeps back.

But if the PCs have already played either HWA1 or HWA2, Kaze's trail is cold, perhaps weeks old. And if they have played both the earlier modules in this trilogy, Kaze hasn't been seen in Colima for months. Adjust the time according to how long it took the players to complete the previous adventures. But the PCs needn't worry; they can find all the clues they need in Colima at any time.

Stoneworkers' Market

This market is busy for such a small town—not crowded, but certainly vigorous. About two hundred merchants and shoppers are haggling at the tops of their lungs, trading eggs, fish, fishhooks, fishnets, woven mats, wooden stools, fruits and vegetables, bone flutes, skin drums, and saddle blankets. They don't use money, just barter.

About a dozen statues around the marketplace. They're big, looming stone figures, carved like people but with the eyes large and bulging.

In every deal, the seller displays the purchase and the item offered in trade to one of these statues. Nothing happens that you can tell, but then they conclude the deal. Sometimes, one trader decides the deal is off.

The statues, an old Coliman custom, are called "observers." Though they are not magical, superstition claims they ensure fairness in all transactions. The custom of presenting the trade to the statues lets each bargainer mull over the deal. In practice, a trader who has made an unfavorable bargain can use the observers as an excuse to back out of the deal.

The PCs can purchase basic supplies at this marketplace, such as food and clothing, but no one sells armor, weapons, or magical items. Since Colimans use no money, the players must role-play their characters' transactions with the slightly crazed merchants. In general, magical items and exotic outer-world objects fetch good prices, but nearly everyone in Colima is too poor to offer the PCs a decent deal.

Play this for comic relief, as the merchants engage in frenzied bargaining, complete with histrionics ("Oh, to think that my beleaguered mother must wait still longer to rebuild her pillaged home!"). Then, as the deal is almost concluded, the merchant appeals to the observers and backs out!

All merchants and customers here are 0-level normal people, unless the story requires otherwise. See the maps of Colima in this module and HWA2 for notable citizens who may be wandering the marketplace.

Asking about Kaze: The market sellers remember Irila Kaze. When she came through, she asked the local wine sellers for "Treesblood," a liqueur

they'd never heard of. (PCs from the Known World recognize it as a strong brandy distilled in Darokin.) Kaze, who appeared quite intent on finding something similar, let the market sellers sniff her last, nearly empty bottle.

The odor reminded them of the pungent brews of Barki, a tough old woman who lives in the hills south of town. Kaze, now desperate for the liqueur, headed that way. Nobody saw her after that.

If you are using the "For New Players" set-up: The sellers all remember the strange gold statuette. "She was showing that around," they say, "asking whether we get much trade from the place where it was made. No, not us." Some old merchants may recognize the statuette's make: "That's that Shahjapur working, that is. Haven't heard from those western folks for cycles and cycles."

As for the battle with Dantello's party, citizens silently direct the PCs to the local graveyard outside town. The five members of Dantello's party lie there in fresh graves marked with simple Stone-carver symbols. If exhumed (a practice likely to elicit protests from the Colimans), the bodies appear to have been incinerated, as by a *fire ball*.

If you have played HWA1: Good questioning by the PCs can elicit one more piece of information, though the superstitious townspeople are reluctant to bring it up. Kaze wore a voluminous cloak that she kept wrapped around her. The Glantrian minister, who stood trim and erect back in Glantri, walked hunched over, and she constantly rubbed at her ribs.

At one point a gust of wind blew open the cloak. "Merciful skies!" the PCs' informant says with a shiver. "I saw her body. Nice clothing, but ripped and ragged along the sides—because there were little hands growing there, right out of her ribs, stubby pink hands with wriggling fingers like a baby's. I still have dream-haunts about it." ("Dream-haunts" is a common term for nightmare, since night is unknown in the Hollow World.)

DM Note: Kaze, a servant of Thanatos, was beginning the transformation that Thanatos desired, into an avatar of a Shahjapuri Immortal, Dakka. This transformation is now complete, and it has unbalanced Kaze's mind. The PCs meet her in Chapter 8. The players won't learn the explanation for her change until the end of the adventure, if then.

About Barki

Everyone in Colima over age 40 knows Barki's history: "She's a crazy lady who fell off a wagon when she was 16 and was never the same afterward. Got really interested in those dinosaurs, those critters that run around in the mountains south of town. She got stranger and stranger, like a dog with the foaming-tooth sickness, until the

time when she tried to bring one of those dinos right into her home! Like a pet or something!

"Well, I don't have to tell you, we drove her out of town. Now she lives out there like a hermit. We still talk about her now and then, mainly as a spooky story to keep the little ones in line.

"But I'll say this, she brews the finest ale I've tasted. Lots of other strange brews, too. I hear she tries new recipes all the time, because she's looking for a potion to heal those dang lizards she cares so much about."

Barki's Lair

Should the PCs announce an intention to meet Barki, nearly anyone in town can (reluctantly) give directions to her cave. Everyone warns the PCs about "Old Olin," a huge dinosaur that rules the southern hills. The citizens of Colima don't know what species it is, just that "it walks upright, fast, and with teeth like for carving stone!"

Since there is a trail (marked but slightly overgrown) to Barki's cave, the uneventful journey south lasts only half an hour.

The trail ends in a narrow grotto between two mountains. This is a dead-end gorge, cut long ago by overflow from a mountain lake that has since dried up. It's wide enough for a large dinosaur to turn around in—barely—and this is convenient, because there are a couple here.

There's a small wooden hut, and beside it an iron cauldron filled with something steaming that smells like old laundry. There's a corral made of wooden logs, and in the corral there are dinosaurs—about a dozen small ones, slow ones with horns and armor, fast ones with long, springy hind legs.

Behind them all, against the rear wall of the canyon, sits one really huge dinosaur, maybe forty feet long, colored mottled green, with a body like a barrel, and a neck as long and thin as its tail. It fills your view.

But the big dinosaur, and all the small ones, are sick or wounded. Some have bandages on their long necks; others are missing an eye or a foot. The big one's two front legs have cloth dressings the size of bed sheets.

In front of the hut stands a fat, hunched old woman wearing what looks like a burlap sack, tied at the waist with rope. This must be Barki. She's swinging an old, rusty battle axe, trying to protect the corralled dinosaurs from an attacker—a monstrous dinosaur, with what may be the biggest teeth you've ever seen and the loudest roar you've ever heard. You decide at once this must be "Old Olin."

This is correct. Barki is defending her patients, injured and diseased dinosaurs that she nurses to health. The big dinosaur is a brontosaurus (apato-



sauros); see p. 21 of the *HOLLOW WORLD™* Adventure Book. Old Olin is an allosaurus, described on p. 20 of the Adventure Book. Show the players its picture, then ask what they want to do.

Running: The PCs can flee without attracting the allosaurus's attention. Barki quickly perishes, and the PCs cannot learn the clues in this encounter. (See the troubleshooting advice under "Where Next?" below.) Since leaving Barki to die is not heroic, give the players a chance to reconsider their cowardice; if they refuse to help, consider reducing their XP award at the adventure's end.

Fighting: The PCs can charge to Barki's rescue in time to prevent Old Olin from eating her. Olin first tries to pin the nearest character. If this succeeds, Olin rends the victim on the next round. If the pin attempt fails, on subsequent turns Olin tries to bite or pin the PC who was last to hurt it. It has no sense of tactics and is quite stupid, but it

retreats when it sustains more than 25 points of damage.

Allosaurus (Old Olin): AC 4; HD 16*; hp 75; #AT 1 bite or 2 claws + pin; Dmg 3d8 or 2d8/2d8 + pin; MV 210' (70'); Save F16; ML 10; AL N; THAC0 7; XP 2,300. The pin attack is made with one claw. If it hits, the victim must save vs. Paralysis or be pinned (prone and unable to attack or cast spells). Another save, for escaping the pin, is allowed each round.

Using the dinosaurs: The other dinosaurs are plant-eaters and have no fighting ability against Old Olin. They're scared to death. However, clever PCs may try freeing and stampeding the corralled dinosaurs. Most of them can't run, but a few can; these confuse Old Olin, and then he runs after them. (They look less threatening than Barki.)

The trouble is, a brave PCs must suffer at least one and perhaps two free attacks by Olin while rushing toward the corral. If Olin pins the PCs, this would be an opportune time for Barki to land a battle axe blow (negligible damage, but an excellent distraction), or for the brontosaurus to make a frantic long-necked lunge at Olin and startle it for a round.

Dinosaurs (12): Select the brontosaurus plus three or four kinds of small dinosaurs from the Adventure Book. None have useful combat ability.

Barki: AC 9; HD 2; hp 7; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4; MV 120' (40'); Save F2; ML 10; AL N; THAC0 19. If the PCs rescue Barki, go to the next subsection. If they don't rescue her, they can't learn anything here.

Talking With Barki

Barki is a strange old hermit. She's slightly deaf; her eyes jerk in odd directions as she talks; she fingers the PCs' amulets and talismans without asking permission. But though she's not socially adept, Barki feels well disposed toward the PCs after they rescue her.

"You listen here," she says sternly. "You did me good. Yes. You did good for me, and *I don't forget it!* I don't! Are you paying attention? What can I do for you?"

The clues: So Barki is friendly toward the PCs. Does this help? Yes, for Kaze dropped clues that Barki can pass to the PCs.

"She wanted that, that, that Treesblood. Lizard-drool, it sounded like. Couldn't help her, not me, no. Then she asked for seasick balm—medicine for the sea-travel sickness. That, I helped her with, and sorry, *sorry* am I that I did! Are you attending what I say, man? Kaze, that woman—kept looking out over the western ocean. Asked questions about pirates. Pirates! As though I know pirates. . . you! *Pay attention!*"

Barki is deeply furious at Irila Kaze. Kaze stole the warding brew that Barki used to fend off Old Olin and his kind, a foul simmering potpourri made of many repulsive ingredients. "She just knocked over the cauldron! No reason! Just to be indecent, that's her, that's her, indecent! Are you listening to me, young man? It all spilled out! How will I make more?"

This offers a mini-scenario: collecting potion ingredients. These include pterosaur guano from the highest cliffs along the bay, venom from a flying viper, and the sweat from Colima's cantankerous blacksmith, Oleg the Smithy. This may take the PCs far out of their way. . . but helping Barki in her quest may be the only way they can get her most important clue. And even if they help her, they have to treat her dinosaurs nicely!

The most important clue: "She, that Kaze person, she asked about some place away overseas. Now, what was it, what-what-what? Shoddy-purr.

Shoppa-joor. Something like that. Asked if traders ever came here from there. Said I, I didn't know, cause I didn't! She said, well, not likely you'll see any from there now—soon, she says, they'll have plenty to worry about at home! Then she laughed, and then, then she tips over my pot! Mark my words, that wench is crazy!"

Barki has much more to say, all abusive but none helpful. However, back in Colima, older natives can identify the name "Shahjapur." Traders from there, "cheerful brown folks," visited Colima over a decade ago, before Merry Pirate raids ruined it as a commercial port. The Colimans know it lies many days' sail due west, but little else.

An Expedition

The PCs can hire a small sailing ship in Colima: the *Big Catch*, a single-masted fishing vessel belonging to Turvy Top-net, a local eccentric. The PCs can hire Turvy's fishermen as crew, so long as the men's families are amply provided for. The ship and crew cost the barter equivalent of the gp prices in the Expert Rules. Of course, the "observer" statues must approve the deal!

If the PCs don't have the wherewithal to hire an expedition, there are alternatives:

- Colima's ruling council may have deduced that Kaze has something to do with the apparent departure of the Immortals. They beg the adventurers to follow her, and they're willing to donate a beaten-up sailing ship and crew to help. Use the *Big Catch*, but give it only three-quarters of its hit points and top speed when new.
- A Merry Pirate ship, commanded by the half-ling Barrowbras Spoke, sails into the bay to raid Colima yet again. See the next chapter for a description of Spoke and his crew. The PCs can defend Colima, take over the ship, and enlist Spoke's crew for a visit to distant Shahjapur.

WHERE NEXT?

Troubleshooting: If the PCs fail to connect with Barki and learn her clues, they should run into a Coliman citizen on good terms with Barki, such as Malda the Herbalist (mentioned on the Colima map in HWA2). Malda, or the citizen of your choice, visits Barki to bring her muffins or collect dinosaur scales. The informant has heard from Barki about what Kaze did and where she's going.

The clues should establish Irila Kaze, her evil nature, her great interest in the distant island nation of Shahjapur, and (not least) her great magical power.

Having gained these clues, the PCs now undertake the long crossing west across the Atlass Ocean toward Shahjapur, starting in the next chapter.

In this chapter the PCs cross the ocean, cross the sky, ride the Floating Continent, or use whatever means they like to get to Shahjapur. The last chapter outlined the likely options. This chapter assumes an ocean voyage, but it still works regardless of the means of transport.

During the trip the PCs have a series of enigmatic dreams. Most of these are sendings from the Immortal, Asterius, who is trying to circumvent his captivity and convey vital clues to his chosen instruments. Unfortunately his captor, Thanatos, eventually realizes what Asterius is doing. So Thanatos starts sending deadly dream-visions of his own.

HOW THEY GET HERE

The PCs' ship must set out from Colima, sail out the mouth of the bay, then travel some 3000 miles across the Merry Pirate Seas and the Anathy Archipelago to Shahjapur. In the Known World, a comparable journey would stretch from the Minrothad Guilds to the eastern coast of Alpathia!

The Expedition

Use the Waterborne Adventures and Weather rules from the Expert Rules. The weather is calm until the PCs' ship reaches the mouth of the Bay of Colima. Thereafter, roll 2d6 for each day's journey, as described in the Weather rules.

Provisions are no problem. The fishing in the bay is excellent; fish of unknown species leap at the PCs' bait as though no one had ever fished these waters before. PCs who dine on the fish experience many new tastes, mostly pleasant.

The route: If the PCs command their own ship, they obviously select their own route. If they are under another's authority, the captain sails straight south-by-southeast ("southeast" by the Hollow World's compass, that is).

Encounters

The 3000-mile journey can be as detailed (or not) as you wish. You can simply tell the players, "You sail for about ten days and arrive at this stretch of coastline." Alternately, insert encounters at your discretion, such as the following:

Seagoing dinosaurs: A pod of eight sea-green plesiosaurs—one huge male, three smaller females, and five young. The male, protecting his territory, trumpets a threat from a good distance. If attacked, the male tries to hold off the PCs' ship while the rest retreat; once they get away, he tries to flee as well.

Flying vipers: A cloud of 3d6 hissing reptiles descends on the ship, perhaps diverted from overseas migration by the smell of food. The PCs should retreat to sheltered quarters, fighting from safe

positions where the deadly vipers cannot bite them. If the ship has sails, the viper attack may damage them.

Such viper attacks are a recent development on the bay. The feathered serpents once kept the viper population in line, but now the vipers are breeding in huge numbers. Use this encounter if you also intend to play HWA2, in order to foreshadow the mystery of the feathered serpents' disappearance.

Flying vipers: AC 6; HD 2**; hp 8; #AT 1 bite or spit; Dmg 1d6 or 1d4, save vs. Poison for half dmg; MV 60' (20'), Fl 300' (100'); Save F1; ML 10; AL C; THACO 16 (18 when spitting); XP 30. See HOLLOW WORLD™ Adventure Book, p. 29.

Merry Pirate Raid: The PCs are called on to surrender by pirates in a small galley—AC 8, 85 hp, 40,000 cn capacity, with one light catapult. The ship, the *Home Base*, is crewed entirely by 90 halfling pirates.

There are 20 2nd level marines (AC 6, 8 hp, THACO 19, Dmg 1-6); 10 sailors of 1st level (AC 8, 4 hp, THACO 19, Dmg 1d6); and 60 halfling rowers. Their captain is the rotund halfling swash-buckler Barrowbras Spoke (5th level, 28 hp, AC 4, THACO 17, Dmg 1d8 spear and 1d6 short sword, *ring of spell turning* and *potion of invulnerability*). All are neutral and worship Korotiku the Trickster.

Should the PCs refuse to surrender to the pirates, Captain Spoke attacks. He retreats when half his crew is defeated or when he himself takes more than 5 hp damage. If captured, Spoke offers a ransom of 5,000 gp for safe delivery to the pirate city of Baraga; Spoke can be bargained up to 7,500 gp. This offer is legitimate—ransoms are a routine custom in the Merry Pirate Seas—but it takes the PCs quite a distance out of their way.

Any NPC captain of the PCs' ship automatically tries to surrender. If the PCs refuse to surrender, Captain Spoke attacks. If the PCs' ship surrenders or is defeated, Spoke courteously loots them of whatever looks valuable. He comments, "Don't see many out this far, gents. Thank you kindly. Glad indeed I am to see you were less trouble than that old biddy some time back. Just about toppled my masts, that one."

Yes, this was Irila Kaze. Adjust the time interval according to how long the PCs have been in the Hollow World. Spoke tried to loot Kaze's ship, but she casually threw a *fire ball* that almost incinerated the *Home Base*. Only then did Spoke see her. "Thought she was an orc for a moment, she was so bulgy about the shoulders, so discolored. And her eyes! Nothing there but crazy, just—what's the word—torment. Not used to thinking about torment, myself, but by Korotiku she put that thought right into my head."

Spoke did not see any other deformities about Kaze, but she was wrapped in an expensive cloak.

"Could have been anything under there, I suppose," he finishes, disquieted.

THE DREAMS

"I could be bounded in a nutshell and count myself a king of infinite space, were it not that I have bad dreams."

— *Hamlet*, II.ii

During four successive sleeps on the journey, the PCs dream. Everyone asleep at the same time has the same dream and cannot be roused from it until it's over. In the other modules in this trilogy, these dream visions provide vital clues sent by the PCs' Immortal ally, Asterius. But in this section, Thanatos has realized Asterius's tactic, and is fighting a subtle war of lies with his captive.

In order to lead the PCs astray, Thanatos tries to distort the dreams as the PCs have them. But as this fails, Thanatos raises the stakes and terrorizes the PCs instead. By the power of Immortal magic, the dreams have real effects. The spells and magic that spellcasters employ are really used up, just as during regular play; and the damage these dreams inflict is actual, physical damage to the PCs' waking bodies!

Dream #1: Side-Trip to Blacklore Valley

The PCs (seem to) awaken on a flying disk of the Blacklore elves. (See the *HOLLOW WORLD™* Sourcebook). The elves, one per PC, lean over them with expressions of concern. They say things like, "We can never thank you enough for coming here and saving our world." The elves try to convince the PCs that their mission was to restore a huge machine necessary to the Hollow World. Now that the PCs have completed the quest, the elves are taking them to a flying disk race in their honor.

The elves offer the PCs soothing flasks of yellow-green wine. Secretly roll a save vs. Poison for all those who drink the wine. Success means the wine has no effect. Failure has an effect when they awaken (see below).

If you feel ambitious, weave an elaborate backstory that plausibly leads to the PCs getting amnesia, falling into a coma, and having lengthy hallucinations. The "hallucinations" are the adventures the PCs have had so far. With good work and fast talking, you might convince your players that the adventure so far has been an elaborate mind game, and this dream sequence is the PCs' real world!

However, small details give the lie to the situation. The elves' colorful clothes have written messages as part of their pattern. Among the bright patterns are phrases like, "I can't get through to you. . . You must seek out Shahjapur. . . Seek to remember the name Dharsatra. . . I can barely touch your minds." The elves themselves don't see these.

Also, some of the elves wandering the streets have had their hair sculpted to resemble pointed pink domes, such as one might see on a building. This is a foreshadowing of the Temple of Eight Sweet Winds, a building described in Chapter 5. In both these cases, Asterius is trying to overcome Thanatos's powerful dream-illusions.

If the PCs point out any of these inconsistencies, the elves call this further hallucination. (More opportunities for a crafty DM to play with the players' perceptions!) However, roll a second secret saving throw for affected characters—success cancels the effect (see below).

If the dreaming characters go along with the elves, they witness a flying disk race and a banquet in their honor. During the banquet, the elves keep offering the wine to the characters. Regardless of whether they drink or not, the dream dissolves into a vague blur of revelry and contentment. Thanatos will end the dream when it is obvious all those who will willingly drink the wine have done so.

Those who are affected by the wine believe that they must seek out the Valley of the Blacklore Elves (tell those affected they feel "enlightened" by the dream); Thanatos has planted the knowledge of how to get there. Victims will actively persist in this delusion for three sleeps.

Dream #2: Rotten Service

You're eating in a crowded, dirty restaurant. You're having bowls of lentil soup seasoned with strange, pungent spices. Dark wooden walls are covered with food stains, and the ceiling is too low. The place is filled with thin brown-skinned men and women, all eating soup.

A waiter wearing only a turban and a loin-cloth approaches your table. He says, "Sirs, the owner has told me that your meal is compliments of the house. We are most sorry that you have come so far for nothing. Our Temple has been repaired by a group of local heroes, with the assistance of the most high Immortals. We all wish you well on your future journey."

There's a scuffle outside. An old white-haired man in a loincloth is trying to enter the restaurant. The waiter runs over and yells, "No un-touchables here!" The old man insists that he must deliver a message for "them"—and he points at you. The waiter shouts to you, "He will kill you! Flee, quickly!"

This dream, and the waiter's lies, come from Thanatos. The restaurant is in Dharsatra. The old man represents another try by Asterius to reach the PCs.

If the PCs do nothing, the dream ends as the old man is forced away from the restaurant. If they flee out the back door, the dream ends. But if they try to muscle their way outside to the old man, Thanatos gets the upper hand over Asterius in the dream:

the customers and staff of the restaurant turn into ghouls!

The ghouls attack at once. *PCs wounded in the battle bear those wounds when they wake up!* If “killed,” they awaken reduced to 1 hp. However, this dream damage heals twice as fast as regular damage. (By the same token, they also get full XP for the ghouls they defeat.) If the battle spills out of the restaurant, the surroundings match the Workers’ Quarter of the city of Dharsatra, described in Chapter 4.

In any case, the PCs recognize the old man when they meet him again in Chapter 5. This is a holy man named Chatterjee, a vital NPC in the coming adventure. (See “NPCs” in the Appendices for his description and background.)

Ghouls (40): AC 6; HD 2*; hp 7; #AT 2 claws/1 bite; Dmg 1d3/1d3/1d3 + paralysis; MV 90' (30'); Save F2; ML 9; AL C; THAC0 18; XP 25.

Dream #3: Quick-Change Artist

You’re standing in an eight-sided hall, a temple of some sort. Devotees, who look like the restaurant customers in your previous dream, cluster around eight idols. Some chant, some sing, some contort their bodies in crazy postures, and some just stand silently.

The old man from the previous dream approaches and lays his hand on your shoulder. He says, “My name is Chatterjee. I feared you would be too late.”

Suddenly he collapses. A dagger with a copper blade protrudes from his back.

A voice behind you says, “A pity I could not have strangled him and felt him die in my arms. The Brotherhood looks forward to meeting you.” You turn and see that many people could have spoken—an old woman, an exotic-looking wizard, a soldier.

All of these people look like citizens of Shahjapur, who are described in the next chapter. The temple is a distorted dream vision of the Temple of Eight Sweet Winds. Consult Chapter 5 for more detail.

No matter which NPC the PCs approach, that character runs from the Temple into a crowded, filthy city (Dharsatra; see Chapter 4). The quarry sheds disguise after disguise. For example, the old woman takes off her mask, and she’s a young male priest; he runs into the crowd to make his getaway, but moments later the PCs spot him removing the young cleric mask and revealing that he’s a filthy old beggar, and so forth.

Keep this up until the PCs are about to nab the fugitive. Then he removes his last mask. There is nothing at all beneath. The dream ends, and the characters awaken exhausted. They feel like they’ve really run through the dusty, smelly streets of Dharsatra!

The “Brotherhood” refers to the league of Shahjapuri assassins called the Kirtanta. The PCs will meet many Kirtanta in this adventure.

Dream #4: Foreshadowing of Dakka

You’re standing under a vast dome. All around you is an ugly spider web—except that the strands seem to be iron bars. The air smells of fire, sweat, and powdered bone. Your own bodies seem to be rippling, or is it the space you occupy that is rippling?

Chatterjee is tracing a figure on the floor. As you watch, it changes from two-dimensional to three-dimensional—to four-dimensional.

A dark figure with many arms leaps up from nowhere, carrying a corroded scythe. You can’t see the body, but the face is that of a old woman with long white hair.

This is Irila Kaze, as the PCs may know. In this dream she has actually contacted the sleeping PCs, via Thanatos, and can converse with them.

Talking with Kaze: Her conversation is calm but quite insane. She begins with threats, then moves to gloating. Madly confident, she can fill in gaps players may have about previous installments in this trilogy. However, she reveals nothing of her own plans beyond enigmatic references to “Shahjapur,” “Dharsatra,” and “the Kirtanta.” She may also refer to herself as “Dakka,” without explanation. She is magically prevented from saying the name “Thanatos.”

Try to establish a personal rivalry between Kaze and the PCs. Perhaps they taunt her. They may comment on her craving for Treeseblood, and that makes her furious. They may attack; see the appendix for her statistics. She, in turn, seems to know something about them (via Thanatos); if possible, dredge up some mistake a player has made during previous adventures in the Hollow World, and wave it under his character’s nose.

When everyone is mad at everyone, Kaze finally cries, “Your puerile ‘yantra’ will do no good—except that it may destroy you, when I destroy it! Haaah!” And she leaps at the pattern, the “yantra,” wielding her scythe.

Fighting: They may not know why, but in the dream the PCs feel it is important to protect this yantra. Encourage the PCs to engage Kaze in battle to preserve the yantra.

This is not a full-scale battle. Instead, run it strongly weighted in Kaze’s favor. Adjust her attack rolls and saving throws to make her an insuperable force. In the dream this does no lasting harm, but it creates tension later in the adventure, as the PCs move toward a real confrontation with her.

Have Kaze “slay” one or two PCs; they awaken in their ship, reduced to 1 hp (but the damage heals twice as fast as normal). Then, in the dream, the surviving PCs see her bring down her rusty

scythe on the yantra. When it hits the glowing pattern, everyone is abruptly sucked into infinite space. There seems to be a green river flowing through the stars, far below.

The dream ends and the characters awaken. (This symbolically foreshadows events in Chapters 8 and 9.)

LANDFALL IN SHAHJAPUR:

Eventually the PCs arrive at the island nation of Shahjapur. (Consult the large color map included with this module.) Next, they should find Dharsatra Port.

There are several ways to Guide the PCs' choice of ports toward Dharsatra. Its sheltered harbor is by far the best on the island. Also, they may stop briefly for supplies at a smaller port and gain a clue pointing to Shahjapur. If nothing else, a sudden windstorm may blow up, driving them toward that port. Or you can let the PCs pick a port, and shift the Dharsatra adventure to that port.

Whatever port they choose, read this as they sail in. (If they're flying, or even swimming, adjust the description accordingly.)

You smell the port before you see it. Even from far away, it smells like spices and garbage and people. Then you see brownish-gray water littered with trash, and crowded piers in the distance. . . and in between, a dozen men scattered around the harbor, standing on its deepest waters.

You look again. No, they're not standing on the water; they're perched on long, springy wooden poles that stick up about eight feet above the water. Each pole has a small peg just above the waterline, and the men stand one-footed on these pegs, holding onto the poles one-handed.

The men have long hair, long beards, and they're dressed in long dirty smocks. They're all staring at the sun. None of them move, except to breathe. They barely notice you; then they go back to looking at the sun.

These are *fakirs*, intensely spiritual Shahjapuri who devote their lives to this fanatical practice in order to gain enlightenment. They are men of all ages from 20 to 60, in wretched health but unmindful of pain. They stand one-legged on these poles for days or weeks at a time, staring upward, never changing position. Some have been doing it, with only brief breaks, for years.

The fakirs represent no harm to the PCs. But they don't do much good, either. Trying to converse with these searchers is like shouting to someone in another dimension. Their concerns are so different from everyday life that communication is impossible. The fakirs say, "Join with all. Strive for



unity. Seek the life force." That's all.

Stage this as an exotic, even creepy, introduction to the alien land of Shahjapur.

WHERE NEXT?

In this chapter, try to establish that Irila Kaze is still ahead of the PCs on this journey. More importantly, use the landfall sequence to show the players this new land is unlike any their characters have seen.

Before continuing with the port sequence, read about the background and culture of Shahjapur in the next chapter. After that, Chapter 4 opens by resuming the port sequence, then moves to an overview of Dharsatra.

SHAHJAPUR

Technology: Iron Age, steel forged.

Life-Style: Theocratic, intensely spiritual, densely crowded city-dwellers and primitive villagers; highly diverse polytheistic cultures, caste system, extremes of wealth and poverty.

Population: 2,500,000 in many large cities and countless villages. Capital city is Amtha (pop. 200,000); largest city is Dharsatra (pop. 450,000). **Outer-World Origin:** Sind, ca. 400 AC.

DESCRIPTION

Terrain: Shahjapur is the largest island in the chain running westward from the Merry Pirate Isles. Like all land along the Hollow World's equator, this island is mountainous; however, on Shahjapur the towering peaks of the World's Spine have given way to steeply descending ranks of high plateaus.

This geography produces various environments. The upper plateaus are windswept grasslands, with fields of wild mountain rice, herds of mountain goats and mountain yaks, snow leopards, and no human habitation beyond the occasional shepherd or hermit.

Further down, the grassy fields give way to the tropical rain forest that covers most of Shahjapur: Sprawling forests of teak, bamboo, and broad-leaved plants. Wildlife gathers here in unparalleled profusion—tigers, long-snouted crocodiles called gavials, wild dogs, elephants with rather small ears, baboons, mongooses, palm civets, sarus cranes, and an amazing variety of snakes. Dinosaurs are also common here. A few human villages here fight constantly with more numerous humanoids, especially primitive pygmy-like gnomes and goblins.

A small part of one plateau at this altitude is the Deccania Desert, kept dry and windy by Immortal magic. This rocky desert serves as a preserve for gazelles, wild boars, sloth bears, a huge short-horned antelope called a nilgai, jackals, hyenas, and porcupines. No intelligent beings live here except a few nomadic bands of gnolls.

The lowest altitudes of Shahjapur, the bands of coastal territory, vary widely in their environments. The jungle reaches the sea at some points, but other coastal stretches are lifeless salt bogs. An excellent river system allows the Shahjapuri to cultivate rice paddies, fruit orchards, and fields of millet and jute (a fibrous plant), as well as numerous and characteristic formal gardens (see below).

Climate: For seven or eight months a year, weather in Shahjapuri is sunny and stable. Toward the end of that season, the endless sunshine dries the rivers and cakes the mud, and the weak, humans and animals alike, begin to die of thirst. Just when it seems the land must break under the strain, comes the monsoon.

The monsoon winds blow strongly for three to

five sleeps, bringing clouds heavier, darker and more full of water than anywhere else. It starts to rain—solid sheets of water, as heavy as any storm the player characters have seen, and it just never stops. Within seven sleeps all the rivers, creeks, ponds and pools are overflowing. Muddy streams fill with dead or drowning creatures of all types. Roads turn into impassable rivers of mud. Even elephants and dinosaurs are trapped in the mire. Cloth turns black with mold, leather turns green with algae, and fine boots sprout mushrooms.

And the rain continues. At the height of the storm, after about twenty sleeps, water and air elements often appear, cavorting in the down-pour.

After another twenty sleeps, the storm slowly begins to die down. In ten more sleeps it is a light rain, then patchy rain. At last the sunny weather returns and the floods recede.

THE SHAHJAPURI

The natives of this land come of Neathar and Oltec stock. The Shahjapuri have nut-brown skin, shiny black hair, black eyes, and tend toward compact, wiry builds. They resemble the Ylari of the Known World; of the Hollow World's peoples, the Nithians resemble the Shahjapuri most closely, but the Shahjapuri are slightly duskier.

Most Shahjapuri are very thin, but this is not a racial characteristic; it's a result of poverty. For all the bounty their land provides, nine in ten Shahjapuri live in loathsome, degraded conditions: crowded huts, rotting food, polluted water, and filth that spreads deadly diseases. The situation is worst in cities, where half of all infants are still-born and the typical worker dies before age 40. In the countryside health improves, but food is harder to find. In city or country, the vast majority of workers cannot read or write.

Customs

Shahjapuri culture is exceptionally diverse. Consider a single block in the Artisans' Quarter in Shahjapur's largest city, Dharsatra.

At the street corner are three beggars, two humans and a gajanta gnoll. All are male; their wives are home in the Domain of the Untouchables. One of the humans has a horrible disfiguring disease; all have brass bells they continually ring. This warns members of higher castes of their presence, lest the priests be contaminated by standing downwind of them. All appear very poor, but one, a twelfth-generation beggar, has so honed his skills that he takes in good wages every day and actually has a palatial home in the Domain of the Untouchables.

A merchant tosses a copper piaster (1 cp) into one of the beggars' bowls. He leaves his shop, where he sells firewood, to toss a coin every sleep; his folk have done so for generations. Entering his



shop behind him is a servant from the house of a princeling named Jawall Nesotra. The servant, who unlike most can read and write, is carrying a list of exotic woods he must buy to burn for his master's birthday party. Because he is dressed in the proper livery, he can pay amounts that would equal many people's lifetime wages, and no one bats an eye.

In the next shop a man haggles with a party of outcasts for their services. His father died two sleeps ago, and he needs to have someone carry the body to the crematory outside of town. Outcasts alone can handle the polluting corpse. The entire funeral will cost two piasters.

Across the street—past the oxcart delivering a load of teak to yet another shop—a holy man, a samdu, rises after having knelt on the roof of this building for twelve years, and begins to announce his revelations to the world. Only a pair of vultures are listening, but he preaches to them with endless energy and sincerity.

In the next building, a first floor restaurant (like the one the PCs dreamed of in Chapter 2) is packed with artisans enjoying onion bread and a dish of lamb and spinach. None have come from more than three blocks away, yet the restaurant is always filled during the glaring endless noon.

Above the restaurant is a woodcarver's shop featuring brightly painted figures of many of the Immortals in all of their aspects. In the back room of the shop, a Kirtanta master assassin is instructing a roomful of novices in the fine art of strangulation.

In the middle of the block a seller of saws has closed his shop temporarily. His wife is having a baby, and he is paying runners to find a midwife.

In addition to these people, more than 300 others live on this block alone.

Compared to the simpler societies found in the rest of the Hollow World, Shahjapur seems to be closer to the living cultures of the Known World.

Although the Shahjapuri live in a teeming nation-state, with great diversity and an apparent wealth of choice, almost all of these people live small lives. They work at their parents' trade. With the exception of a pilgrimage once or twice in their lifetimes to a religious site (such as the famous Temple of the Eight Sweet Winds) these folk may never know what lies in the next village, or even the next city block. The man on the street does not answer those basic human questions, "Who am I?" and "Why am I here?" In fact, they have never occurred to him. The only Shahjapuri who consider such questions are the sandus.

Samdu

"Samdu" (pronounced SAHM-doo) is variously translated as "ultimate being" and "accomplishment." The word embodies not only Shahjapuri's predominant faith but that faith's goal: achievement of unity with the common spirit of all life.

For the followers of samdu, themselves called samdus, all living things partake of holiness. Samdus do not pay homage to specific Immortals, but rather to the life spirit as it shows in the Immortals, mortals, and all creatures. Since the Shahjapuri believe one cannot conceive of this life spirit without some specific embodiment, they have created an endless pantheon of Immortal "aspects"—different incarnations of the true Immortals to represent various different ideas.

So for instance, the samdus pay homage to Ilsundal, the Greater Immortal in the Sphere of Energy (see the DM's Sourcebook in the HOLLOW WORLD™ boxed set). But nowhere in Shahjapur can the visitor find a temple devoted to just Ilsundal, the Immortal. No, instead there are temples of Ayodhya, the aspect of Ilsundal devoted to abstract thought; to Sita, Ilsundal's supposed female aspect devoted to contemplation of nature; to Laksman, one of the embodiments of Ilsundal's opposition to Atzanteotl. . . . The samdus even revere separate aspects of Ilsundal according to which aspect of Atzanteotl he is opposing!

Samdu claims 33,333 separate Immortal aspects. Many of them represent actual Immortals active in the Hollow World. Many more have no connection to actual Immortals, but are simply creations that the Shahjapuri originated to embody an important idea. In samdu, the distinction is not important; the central idea is that all these aspects, whether of true Immortals or fictitious, are paths to appreciation of the holy life spirit.

Fatalism: That holy spirit pervades every Shahjapuri's whole life. To set aside a particular activity as worship would be meaningless in Shahjapur. As they would say, every contact one has with other life, whether prayer or eating or whatever, is a form of worship.

To a foreign visitor, the Shahjapuri live in a bewildering mixture of what might be called the sacred and the profane. Temples of stunning beauty stand beside the most degraded slums. Ascetics of breathtaking piety walk through muddy streets, stepping over sleeping children who live in doorways. The Shahjapuri believe the world cannot be improved, and that attempts to do so are doomed. All must endure this life without protest; some do so in hopes of gaining a better station in the next life, while others concentrate on achieving improvement in the "inner world"—that is, the enlightenment of their own spirits.

To many Shahjapuri, compassion for one's fellow citizens is meaningless. If he has achieved enlightenment, then no amount of degradation can interrupt that state of bliss; and if he has not,

then what use is there in improving his physical circumstances, when the spirit goes untended? Better to endure, and hope for rewards in the next life.

This fatalistic spirit show up in two ways:

1. NPC reactions: A bloodthirsty slaughter can take place at one end of a block, and if there is no danger to the people down the street, they won't get involved. Not only that—if they're busy, they won't even bother to watch!

The concept of asking for local help to fight evil is foreign to this society. Locals are blind to the degradation of their society; if the PCs point out flagrant examples of social injustice, the Shahjapuri simply won't understand. Characters may be able to pay beggars to start a disturbance, but they won't motivate citizens to take up arms.

2. Information gathering: Shahjapuri tend to answer questions very directly. Since everything is destined to be so, they won't pick out special data as being more significant in the course of a chain of occurrence.

For example, if asked, "Are the Kirtanta assassins active in this neighborhood?" a Shahjapuri would not tell the PCs all he knows. ("Not only are they active, but I think the baker at the end of the block is a member, and I'm pretty sure they have meetings there.") Instead, he'd answer, "Yes."

Caste

The term "caste" originally meant "enslaved ones." When humans first migrated to ancient Sind, the land was infested with gnolls. Rather than exterminating the humanoids, the humans enslaved them, creating a social underclass. Eventually human criminals were also demoted to this underclass.

With the arrival of the ruling shapeshifters (see "History," below), the original purpose of polarizing society changed into one of stratifying it. The shapeshifters believed this made an efficient society, and so the practice evolved from custom to law to (what was finally seen as) the natural order.

Castes create boundary lines across which marriage cannot occur; even friendly social intimacies, like drinking from the same cup or sitting down to the same meal, are taboo. To be born into a caste is now seen as the action of fate and accepted as part of one's lot in life.

In Shahjapur there are four distinct castes: priests (*brahmats*), nobles and rulers (*shaktiri*), artisans (*vasiri*), and unskilled workers (*sudyar*). This last caste also includes most common criminals.

In Shahjapuri society, the priest caste holds the highest rank. Only males can be priests. Women of this caste, though theoretically due equal respect, remain in seclusion in their homes, seldom contacting any male outside their immediate families.

Note that not all members of the priestly caste are clerics. Although this is the most common profession of male members of this class, its ranks also include teachers and wizards (but usually not fighters or thieves).

The lowest of the low are the outcasts, called "untouchables" or "unclean" (*gajanta*). They live in sprawling ghettos outside city walls. They are considered so polluted that they can never interact with society.

Ranks of Shahjapuri Castes (Highest to Lowest)

Priests and spiritual leaders

Moguls, administrators, leaders, and warriors

Landowners, merchants, tradesmen, and artisans

Servants and laborers

Outcasts or untouchables (not a caste)

The Status of Women

Women in Shahjapur hold few rights. They have no right to equal standing in court, to inherit money, to enter the skilled trades, to learn priestcraft or spellcasting, or even to express themselves artistically.

Wealthy families keep their women at home. The women of the priestly and administrative castes are seldom seen. Among the merchants and artisans, women are active in their husbands' business in inverse proportion to the business's economic success. Only among the outcasts do women enjoy anything near equal rights, and that is only because outcasts of both genders have no rights.

Demihumans

The Shahjapuri population is almost all human. Nonhumans are only found in the large cities. Villages are almost all human, with the occasional shapeshifter in the fold.

Among the outcasts, some of the original population of enslaved gnolls remains, comprising about one percent of the population. This group is unlike gnolls found elsewhere in terms of culture, language, or alignment. For example, they have no particular dislike for elves or dwarves.

Another one percent are shapeshifters, long a part of Sindian society: doppelgangers, rakshasas, bhuts, and others. These live at all levels of society, from wealthy beggars to established artisans to leading clerics. A final percent are demihumans, almost all of whom are artisans.

All of these groups think of themselves as Shahjapuri. They do not speak the languages associated with them in the Known World, and if the PCs approach them as long-lost brothers, they become confused. Conversely, demihuman PCs are assumed to belong to the artisan caste.

CULTURE

The strange and teeming world of Shahjapur has excelled in certain sciences and arts.

Medicine: Despite the often unhygienic conditions here, nonmagical medicine and surgery have reached their highest development in the Known or Hollow Worlds. Abundant herbal and mineral medicines actually remove fevers and pain. Physicians belong to the artisan caste.

Magical healing is normally reserved for the priestly and noble castes. Since spells are at a premium during this adventure, only the highest ranks of the priest caste will receive any magical treatment.

The arts: Distinctive features of Shahjapuri architecture include the minaret or spire, the pointed arch, the bulbous dome, and a strong use of horizontal lines and elaborate ornamentation. The visual arts are highly developed, especially in the painting of miniatures. Most homes, even those of the poor, contain small pieces of illustrated parchment, landscapes and especially portraits, executed with meticulous realism. (Recall that accurate portraits can sometimes be clues. . . .)

Although literacy is low, calligraphy enjoys the status of a fine art, and exotic lettering is used as a decorative device on screens (absolutely essential as room dividers in the crowded environment) and upon the facades of buildings.

Fatalism has affected both drama and music. Since Shahjapuri view the world as an unfolding, predetermined drama, they prefer their plays, ceremonies, and festivals to reflect that long duration. A village may spend eight or nine sleeps on a single dramatic retelling of a mythological event. Everyone is apt to have a part, and the entire performance drags on, hovering between ecstasy and boredom.

Shahjapuri music, played on sitars (twangy stringed instruments) and drums, tends to run through every possible variation on the mood of an endless string of time. Shahjapuri philosophers see existence as a slow dance to the music of time, lasting tens of millions of years. For them all things are the least possible dust on the great lake of eternity, including the brief play called "Man-kind."

Government and the Army

If you ask any Shahjapuri who *leads* a given city, village, or even the nation, he or she names the highest-ranking cleric. The influence of the priest caste is paramount—they are believed to represent the will of the Immortals. However, if you asked who *runs* the area, a Shahjapuri names the highest-ranking member of the nobility.

The Grand Mogul: This all-but-omnipotent ruler has absolute control of the army, the courts, and public works. His office is theoretically inher-

ited, but in fact the sons of the Great Mogul often kill each other, leaving the next Mogul to be named from survivors closest in rank to the royal family. The only powers in Shahjapur greater than the Grand Mogul are the priests, who seldom exercise their influence.

The reigning Grand Mogul, Koriktodeva Raya, dwells in a white marble palace in the Nobles' Quarter of the capital, Amtha. He owns one of the most valuable treasures in the Hollow World, the Peacock Throne. With its many inlaid diamonds, rubies, emeralds and other precious stones, its worth is inestimable.

Raya himself is far from inestimable. He is young (28 years old), vigorous almost beyond belief (Con 18), an excellent fighter, and firmly in control of the government. However, he and his followers have no desire to improve society. Since Raya delegates authority well to his provincial moguls, he can spend almost all his time in his favorite activity, tiger hunting.

Mansabdars: Nobles are ranked by a bureaucratic system called the *mansabdari*. Each rank is a number, meaning the number of soldiers the leader controls and (by implication) the number of citizens he is responsible for.

For example, the lowest rank, a 10, controls ten cavalry soldiers and is responsible for the welfare and control of 1000 citizens. The highest rank beneath the Grand Mogul is that of mogul, a provincial governor. Each Mogul is ranked 25,000 in the mansabdar system, for each controls an army of 25,000 horsemen.

Mansabdars act as soldiers, police, civil engineers, jailers, magistrates, assistants to tax collectors, and so on. Each receives a salary from the state. There is no special qualification for appointment—mansabdars can be transferred from one duty to another of an entirely different nature, making for some administrators skilled in all areas, and others who spread their incompetence throughout the system.

The panchat: A mogul rules a province, but his power is not absolute like the Grand Mogul's. The provincial mogul rules with the aid and consent of the highest-ranking mansabdars under him, in a council called the *panchat*. Each city's panchat represents different local interests, but in general panchats are large, disorganized, and corrupt.

Panchat councilors have great latitude in day-to-day affairs, something like cabinet ministers. The office is regarded as a license to get rich, particularly through the efforts of the *darmani*.

Darmani: Shahjapur's tax collectors, the despised *darmani* ("hyenas"), earn peculiar wages: they keep whatever they collect beyond the state's specified fee for their district (and whatever a panchat councillor rakes off the top). Ergo, a greedy darmani is a successful darmani. Since they have great power to enforce lawful tribute, the darmani rake in almost all the hard currency a

citizen earns. A greedy member of this breed may try to tax the PCs!

Most of these taxes directly enrich the moguls and the panchat councilors. The wealth of these nobles doesn't directly mirror their social power or their ability level. The priests, who usually live simply, possess far greater power.

Economy

Money: The excellent Shahjapuri currency follows that of Sind. The basic coin is the *piaster* (abbreviated Pr), worth one copper piece. A piaster buys a good meal, and 2 Pr buys a night's comfortable lodging with servants in attendance.

Ten piasters make one *khundar* (Kh), worth a silver piece. A frugal low-caste worker may save 2 Kh a month. Ten khundars make a *bhani* (Bh; worth 1 gp or 2 ep). This is about a year's savings for a large family.

Five bhani make a *rupee* (Rp; 5 gp), more money than most people in Shahjapur ever see. A rupee buys a small dwelling, with enough change to hire a servant for months. Five rupees make the common coin of rulers and potentates, the *guru* (Gu; 25 gp). A guru, a heavy and attractive gold coin, could feed a whole village for a week—if it were not promptly taken by government tax collectors.

Magic

The caste system has greatly affected the distribution of spellcasting talents in Shahjapur. Clerics are only found among the priest caste or in a few rare instances among the outcasts. The later group includes gnoll wokani.

Magic as a philosophical art is highly respected among the priest caste, and some magic-users achieve great ability. These mages seldom put their art to practical use, and would much rather spend time talking about the significance of magic and what it means to the eternal life spirit. However, such magical artifacts as do remain, souvenirs of the Known World, generally remain with this caste for safekeeping.

Among the administrative caste, magic use is sharply limited. Seldom do noble magicians advance beyond the middle levels. Low-level spells among the artisan caste figure in the lore passed from father to son, and becomes a type of trade secret. There are almost no magic-users among the workers or outcasts.

HISTORY ON THE OUTER WORLD

Shahjapuri civilization originates entirely from the Known World land of Sind.

Hundreds of miles west of the westernmost reaches of the Atruaghin Clans, across the roasting sands of the Sind Desert, lies a great nation-state.

In the eastern lands this country takes its name from the desert nearby, and scholars and travellers know it as Sind. However, the name derives from the Sindai language's word for "desert," making it both redundant and inaccurate—Sind is extravagantly fertile.

The natives of this land, though they recognize the name "Sind" and use it with foreign visitors, actually call their own land Shahjapur, or "domain of the Immortal King." The name's true origin is lost in Sind's ancient history, though a hundred myths explain it in a hundred different ways. (If the name was ever accurate, certainly it is no longer. Sind's current archcleric, Chandra ul Nervi, is not Immortal.)

The name of Sind did not appear in Known World histories until about six centuries ago, when intrepid explorers reached and named the area. However, Sind has a long history stretching back several millennia. In its early centuries, tiny principalities squabbled in endless, futile warfare. Those tiny states survive as Sind's provinces. . . and some of their rivalries also survive. But by 400 BC (Before Crowning) a conquering army had united most of modern Sind—an army of monsters.

The Reign of the Chambahara: The so-called "chambahara" ("deformed animals") were intelligent shapeshifters who displayed uncommon ambition and organization. They included bhuts, rakshasas, yakshasas, were-tigers, dopplegangers, and other shapeshifters.

It is unknown how long they plotted this takeover, whether they acted alone, or whether they were guided by some evil influence from beyond. In their six centuries of power, they created a stable, fatalistic society unlikely to revolt; a populous society that could feed those chambahara that dined on human flesh; a diverse society, so that no small group could rise to power. The chambahara crushed all invading armies, but tolerantly incorporated them into the existing system; to these monsters, all people were simply cattle.

Their fall: Around 180 AC a member of the noble caste, Thombara the Daring, decided that his countrymen should not be fodder for such evil beings. He began to organize hunts, careful to let his chambahara masters think that this was one more idle diversion for the human nobility. In reality, he trained adventurers and, with the aid of magical weapons, finally led a rebellion against the chambahara.

In the year 199 AC Thombara was crowned as Grand Mogul ("liberator"). He institutionalized the organization he had set up for the conquest, which remains today in Sind as well as Shahjapur as the mansabdar system. Defeating the monsters proved easier than changing attitudes; Sindian society remained very diverse and conservative. Thombara attempted to introduce the idea of promotion through merit, but the fatalism the chambahara had introduced remained strong in Sind.

About two centuries later, Sind encountered early trading expeditions from the west. Ka the Preserver recognized that this contact would irrevocably alter Sindian culture, so the Immortal transplanted a section of Sind to the Hollow World, to preserve this unique blend of cultures.

HISTORY IN THE HOLLOW WORLD

As with most other cultures transplanted here, after the initial shock of transition wore off, the Sindians (now the Shahjapuri) adapted and even flourished in the Hollow World. The already strong trends to cultural fatalism and stasis reinforced and complement the *Spell of Preservation*.

Exploring the "inner world" (as opposed to the Hollow World) through contemplation became the goal of life. Skills such as cartography and navigation have vanished. Since this gives little for the army to do, not only are they a poorly trained fighting force, but their reputation and influence decrease with each passing year, creating a power vacuum.

A century ago Thanatos began to influence this land. He touched certain individuals at random. From these subtle influences came the new force in Shahjapur, the *Kirtanta*—the society of assassins (see the next chapter and the NPCs Appendix.)

RELATIONS WITH OTHER RACES

Shahjapur is unaware of most other peoples of the Hollow World and has no desire to meet them. They do know about the Merry Pirates, due to frequent pirate raids. Those raids create predictable animosity, yet the Shahjapuri have erected few defenses against the pirates. In their view, the raids are part of this imperfect life, and attempts to protect against them are doomed from the start.

Shahjapur has no navy, but of late a few large ships have been fitted to carry elephants. Some of the Grand Mogul's sons consider mounting an attack on the Merry Pirates. Normally such an action would be unthinkable in fatalistic Shahjapur. Perhaps the Kirtanta assassins wish to expand their sphere of influence.

When foreign visitors arrive on Shahjapuri shores, either as traders for teak and spices or through shipwreck, they are tolerated by this fatalistic society—but if they violate caste restrictions, such as by associating with untouchables, no one else will speak to them. They can't enter restaurants, rent lodgings, or even buy from street vendors.

Of course, Shahjapur is a big place with many cities, so the unwise visitor can often hide from a past indiscretion. One of the best places to hide is the land's biggest city, Dharsatra.

This chapter explores the least livable city in Shahjapur, Dharsatra. Once called “an archetype of holiness and filth, mingled like blood and offal,” Dharsatra displays the extremes of life in Shahjapur. This section also describes the assassin cult known as the Kirtanta, now the greatest power in the city.

HOW THEY GET HERE

Consult the color map of Dharsatra included with this module.

If the characters have chosen to arrive elsewhere than the port, skip to the Typical Encounters under Events, below. If they arrive at the port, one Sarjoo Singh, a low-ranking member of the administrative caste, meets their ship.

A thin brown-skinned man approaches your vessel. He has black hair and eyes, sharp features, and he looks like he’s in his mid-thirties. He wears a loose-fitting, slightly dirty linen shirt and pants, and has a white silk turban set with a small reddish stone, probably a cheap ruby. He carries a leatherbound ledger and pen.

Whatever he’s about to do, his bored air makes it clear it’s routine. From the dock he hails the captain. “Hello! You will be stating for me your point of origin, please?”

Sarjoo is barely past 20; they age fast in Shahjapur. He records the number of people arriving, their cargo, and their purpose in coming. As long as the characters provide plausible answers, there is no problem. If the characters give suspicious answers, they will have frequent encounters with the city guard.

Sarjoo is a busy man; he provides courteous but rushed answers to the characters’ questions. If the characters show no visible signs of wealth and no trade goods, Sarjoo advises them to stay out of the administrative district and to keep their stay as short as possible. He charges a 10 gp docking fee. If the characters molest him, he yells for a squad of guards, who arrive in three rounds.

Sarjoo: 2nd level magic-user; AC 9; hp 5; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4 or by spell; MV 120’ (40’); Save MU2; ML 7; AL L; THAC0 19. Administrative caste, mansabdar rank 20; dagger, canteen; ledger book doubles as spellbook. Spells: *light*, *shield*.

City guards (10): AC 5; hp 12 each; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8 + 1 (sword and strength bonus); MV 90’ (30’); Save F2; ML 9; AL N; THAC0 18. Administrative caste, unranked. Each carries long sword and short mahogany truncheon (1d4).

City guard mage: AC 9; hp 8; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4 or by spell; MV 120’ (40’); Save M2; ML 7; AL L; THAC0 18. Spells: *light* (x2), *web*. Administrative caste, mansabdar rank 10. Carries dagger and sometimes a mahogany staff.

After dealing with Sarjoo, the PCs may explore the port and secure transportation for the 10-mile trek to the city proper.

Every berth of this vast port is filled; there are ships of all sizes. The air is overpowering with spices—cinnamon, cloves, allspice, pepper—and with the smell of filth and the crematoria of the city. The water is polluted, unspeakably foul—and yet religious samdus bathe in its foulness, proclaiming themselves pure and holy. Most of the other ships come from other cities of Shahjapur.

Two types of guides present themselves. Both groups are lean, almost emaciated natives with diseased-looking camels. One group seems a little better fed, and their camels have ornate harnesses and tack. The other group has plain harnesses.

The plain-harness guides will take you to the city for two silver pieces. The others charge two gold pieces. No one seems to see anything odd in this. They don’t find you odd either, though you are the only foreigners around.

The plain group are outcasts, untouchables. If the characters choose to go with them, they arrive in Dharsatra via the Street of Misery (see the color map). If they enter the city this way, reduce their Charisma by 6 when they deal with non-outcasts.

If the PCs choose the more expensive guides (who belong to the administrative caste), they enter Dharsatra by the Street of Wealth. If they decide to walk, or if they brought their own mounts, they probably enter the city by the Street of Vigor. The latter two entrances do not affect Charisma.

The 10 or so miles to the city, over a well-worn cobblestone road, pass through a jumbled countryside. There are piles of rubbish; patches of brilliant jungle flowers; cenotaphs and religious statues beautifully worked in white marble; huts and shacks devoted to untouchable trades forbidden in the city (butchering camels and sheep, tanning leather); and blazing crematoria. Cremation, followed by dumping the ashes in the river, is the preferred funerary practice.

THE SCENE

The largest port in Shahjapur, Dharsatra actually lies a few miles inland from the Northern Atlass Ocean. The city rests in a bend along the wide, slow, muddy gray river called the Monbobo.

Fetid salt marshes lie to the north and west, ideal breeding grounds for mosquitos and various diseases. Bamboo groves and open fields of rice, jute, and sesame reach south. Beyond them, rain forests, home to tigers and orangutans and giant pythons, stretch to the distant cliffs.

History of Dharsatra

When Ka the Preserver relocated a section of Sind to the Hollow World, Dharsatra was brought along as a kind of Sind in miniature, reflecting the mix of high piety and developed arts with the worst of living conditions.

The outer-world Dharsatra began as a small river village near an excellent seaport. An early Grand Mumal, Hooghily, developed the port and opened up a trade in jute, bamboo, teak, and spices.

Just before its transfer to the Hollow World, Dharsatra had undergone rapid growth, for these trade items were beginning to sell to the trade caravans from the east. Since the transfer to the Hollow World, Dharsatra continues to trade heavily with the rest of Shahjapur, and what little trade goes on with the rest of the world flows through this vast city.

Layout of Dharsatra

Even at a miles' distance, Dharsatra's stench of overcrowding rises with the heat waves. Yet through the gaps in the slum buildings, the PCs can make out bands of green.

Dharsatra is a roughly circular city sharply divided into four quarters. Each quarter is dominated by one of the four castes of Shahjapuri society. The mazes of narrow streets in each quarter contrast with the four broad avenues which separate them.

Each avenue has a lush parkway with fountains and statuary between two streets, each 40 feet wide. Why are they so wide? So the castes do not suffer pollution by contact with one another.

In the center of the city, where the four avenues meet, lies the Temple of Eight Sweet Winds. For a description of the Temple, see the next chapter.

Staging Notes

In describing Dharsatra, always emphasize the vast number of people; the contrasts of wealth and poverty, cleanliness and filth, beauty and ugliness. Any street near the center of town affords plenty of diversity, no matter what quarter it's in. And it's always crowded, far more densely than most cities the PCs have seen.

That said, the different quarters offer different perspectives on Shahjapur's society. Here are capsule descriptions.

Warriors' (Administrators') Quarter

In this clean quarter the narrow wooden buildings are covered in stucco and whitewashed. The streets are cobblestone, and the sewers are enclosed.

The buildings at the outer edge are ten stories tall; those near the Temple, one story. The city guards live in the tall buildings at the outer edge of the quarter. Extensive, hellish jail complexes lie

underground at the center of the quarter. Courts are in the one-story buildings near the Temple of Eight Sweet Winds.

All buildings, including administrative buildings, hold extended families, usually one per story. All members of the family participate in the family's business.

If the PCs have not identified themselves with the outcasts, they can obtain training here in fighting or spellcasting.

Artisans' Quarter

Buildings here are narrower and taller (up to 12 floors) than those in the Warriors' Quarter. Open sewers run through the cobblestone streets, which are extraordinarily crowded with water oxen bearing loads of teak, wagons with brass wares, etc.

Each block consists of a cluster of buildings housing one trade—tinsmiths or rug weavers, for example. Prices and quality vary widely; haggling is a necessary and much admired skill. Foreigners and members of the artisan caste can always find low-paying jobs as apprentices—simply set out along the Street of Knowledge with a picture of the kind of work you're looking for.

Potions are occasionally available in the bazaar. Magical items can fetch good prices here as well.

All thieves who are not outcasts belong to the Thieves' Guild here, which has its headquarters beneath a jute rope factory. As in the Domain of the Untouchables, inns, taverns, theaters, and camel rental agencies abound.

Priests' Quarter

Buildings here are as tall and narrow as in the Quarter of the Workers, but they are kept white-washed and scrupulously clean. So are the spotless streets, with sewers sanitarily enclosed beneath (cleanliness and purity are the obsessions of the priest caste).

Many of the priests here live in almost monastic conditions, gladly spending their lives in meditation and prayer. A few use their position and prestige to enjoy a worldly life. Their houses, built around gardens and pleasure domes, are conspicuous in this pristine environment.

Several priests maintain large libraries that contain information about the Temple of Eight Sweet Winds, tracts on the nature of the Immortals, or leads to further adventures, such as treasure maps.

Workers' Quarter

The buildings are taller and for the most part uglier in this quarter. Those nearest the Temple of the Eight Sweet Winds begin at three stories in height (contrasting with the one-story buildings in the other quarters). These buildings are gaily painted and carved, hotel-like structures, houses for multiple noble families.

Housing quality falls off sharply in the next blocks outward—unpainted (and often unsafe)

wooden buildings, each rising a little higher than its predecessor, tower to block out the sunlight in between. On the darkened streets below, grim underfed people scurry off to their duties.

The only businesses here are large, cheap, very bad restaurants. Money seldom changes hands here; the restaurant owners maintain tally sticks on their patrons, collecting by the month. No lodging is available here.

If characters throw around large sums of money in the restaurants here (or offer to buy information for a gold piece), they are met with suspicion rather than gratitude. Everyone talks about them, and this leads to daily meetings with the City Guard or even a Kirtanta ambush.

This is the only area besides the Domain of the Untouchables where one sees children. Children normally don't begin work until they are ten or 11, and since they are not apprenticed to a particular trade as in other quarters, here they have a childhood. Small gangs of kids run unattended through the streets. Unlike their parents, they have lively curiosity, and gather around foreigners asking many bright questions.

Domain of the Untouchables

A tremendous slum lies around the edge of the city, safely out of contact with any quarter. The unclean dwell here, the invisible and untouchable—the outcasts.

Although there are few among the outcasts who are extremely wealthy, their stone houses stand out like palaces. Most of the wooden buildings here are unpainted and of poor construction. Fire is a constant hazard; indeed, there is a fire in this area every few sleeps.

The buildings here were built on marshy ground, so everything is pervaded by a wet, rotting smell. The outcasts scavenge from the rest of the city, and wagons full of dung for sale to farmers (for a few coppers) roll down the muddy, unpaved streets. Leprous beggars sit everywhere pleading for alms, and the sight of dead bodies in the streets is not uncommon.

Money goes a long, long way here. The PCs can easily raise tatterdemalion armies to create diversions.

THE KIRTANTA

History

Kirtanta means “finisher.” Centuries ago, a group of philosophers, priests, and wizards began a serious study of the process of Entropy. Their initial study focused on destruction as the prelude to new growth or rebirth. Thanatos sensed their studies and isolated them from the balancing effect of the Temple of Eight Sweet Winds. As they became estranged from the balance and mainspring of Shahjapur culture, they came to see destruction as a liberating force. The initial group formed a magical



and religious union with Thanatos and began to spread their influence among a larger group.

Outcasts, foreigners, thieves, demihumans, and humanoids now belong to this powerful secret society. It offers certain advantages to its initiates. Through cultural and disguise training, outcasts may assume the roles of merchants or administrators. Thieves may gain access to great treasures and always have a safe house to which they can retire. Those few foreigners who have been stranded in Shahjapur, by shipwreck or other mishap, never quite fit into the caste structure. The Kirtanta offers them a sense of belonging and possibilities for advancing their status and wealth. Humanoids (particularly gnolls) are treated by society as outcasts and can receive the same bounties.

Methods and Victims

The Kirtanta do not share all the fatalism of Shahjapuri culture. They believe in active change and have long-term goals of ultimate destruction. Thanatos has influenced them, making them highly dangerous to the established order.

The Kirtanta believe that every killing speeds the universe to its destined end. However, since it is as easy to kill a rich person as a poor one, they prefer the former. . . because the Kirtanta also like wealth.

Kirtanta act in groups—usually four Kirtanta (levels 1-4), one master Kirtanta (level 7-10), and

one doppelganger. They use various acts, such as a family distraught that their youngest child has just been injured by a teak wagon. The “child” is the doppelganger, the master Kirtanta one of the weeping brothers. The master strangles the victim while the others hide this crime with their bodies. If need be, the doppelganger takes the victim’s form to sneak into his house and take more treasure for the Kirtanta organization.

To capture a victim, the Kirtanta usually put a sleeping drug in the target’s food and spirit away his or her sleeping body to one of their lairs. There a master Kirtanta assumes the victim’s form and spends a few hours interrogating or torturing the victim. The master Kirtanta uses his silver pickaxe to age the victim 30 or 40 years, then assumes the victim’s place by the end of the sleep. The aged victims are easier to control and, should they escape, probably cannot resume their roles in society.

The Kirtanta Now

When the time came, a year or so ago, Thanatos sent dreams to all the Kirtanta of the coming “avatar of Dakka, black mother of doom” who would lead them to power over the Hollow World. The Kirtanta dedicated themselves totally to “Dakka.”

After Irila Kaze arrived and was transformed, their belief moved into the realm of fanaticism. Now they recruit and slay as never before. For instance, they have stepped up infiltration of the noble and priest castes. Back when clerics got spells every sleep, it was hard to impersonate a priest; now it’s easy!

In addition, the Kirtanta of Dharsatra have a special mission to protect the Temple of the Eight Sweet Winds (see the next chapter). Some of the society are at work “restoring” the Temple of the Eight Sweet Winds. The Kirtanta make it their job to kill off any foreigner who asks too many questions.

The Kirtanta have no idea why this is important. They follow their orders fanatically—after all, how else can you throw over the whole of the order of the world? Only the highest ranking Kirtanta know that Dakka, the transformed Irila Kaze, dwells in the Temple’s floating dome. And only Irila Kaze and Thanatos know that Thanatos has hidden the time marker there, preventing the Immortals from returning until his plots have run their course.

Interacting With the PCs

The PCs interact with the Kirtanta at the Temple of Eight Sweet Winds in the next chapter—but even away from the Temple, the Kirtanta can provide excitement, true or false leads, and a basis for further adventures in Shahjapur.

First and most likely, the PCs could witness a Kirtanta assassination attempt and intervene.

Second, if characters express great revulsion at

the Shahjapuri culture—if they don’t fit in—this alienation appeals to the Kirtanta. They may invite the PCs to join their society! Exotic foreigners can be powerful allies or wealthy victims. A Kirtanta recruitment attempt and low-level lair can provide an evening’s fill-in adventure.

A member of the order contacts the PC and mentions a group “that could vastly increase your social standing.” If the potential recruit pretends interest, the member escorts him to a secret gathering where he meets several successful Kirtanta. At this point, the Kirtanta finally realize the character’s decent nature, and they attack!

Third, if the PCs openly use magic not found in the Hollow World, the Kirtanta leader may hear of it. If so, he wants the magic and its secrets. A strong band of Kirtanta attempts to capture the character within 1d4 sleeps.

Fourth, due to some prior encounter a Kirtanta assassin becomes duty-bound to track down and kill a particular PC. Have this spooky fanatic show up many adventures later—even outside the Hollow World—to attempt his revenge.

EVENTS

This section describes typical encounters on the streets of Dharsatra. Before they find Chatterjee and the Temple of Eight Sweet Winds (in the next chapter), or whenever they wander the streets, the PCs may meet one or more of the following:

Fabro Jehail, a wandering samdu, claims immunity to cobra venom and says he can foretell the future.

The first claim is true. Jehail asks for a coin “to further his studies.” He opens a woven basket and sticks his hand into a swarming mass of five black cobras. They either bite him or spit in his eyes. This has no effect on him, but the cobras are real and quite venomous. Perhaps he was simply born immune.

For a second coin, Jehail enters a prophetic trance. Although he believes in his powers, his predictions are completely wrong. “You will gain a great treasure if you go to the Priests’ Quarter and sit in front of a certain fountain.” (Actually, they’ll get into a fight with the city guard; it’s a sacred fountain.) “Later you will battle orc tribes in the desert. You will discover what you seek beneath the sea. . . .” And so on.

Fabro Jehail: 1st level cleric; AC 9; hp 5; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4; MV 120’ (40’); Save C1; ML 5; AL N; THAC0 19.

Jawaharlal Asutosh and his crew of five trainers lead ten elephants through the crowded road to a palace building project in the Warriors’ Quarter. Two trainers are dwarves, professionals in the art of elephant-assisted stonemasonry. If someone buys them a cool drink from a nearby drink vendor’s cart, they talk amiably, mainly about stone-

working and the problems of keeping elephants fed in a large city. They can provide general exposition about Dharsatra and Shahjapur.

The dwarves, Rami and Akdar, are lawful 1st level dwarves with 6 hit points apiece. The others are all 0-level humans.

Maidan Nakhoda, an apothecary of the artisan caste, has just had his bag of fever-reducing herbs stolen. He was visiting a sick friend and had hoped to get the herbs to him soon. Just a minute ago and a block away, the characters saw a disappointed-looking man dumping dried leaves from a leather purse. Maidan can offer helpful PCs a sleeping place in his tiny shop in the Artisans' Quarter. He is overworked, so he wants someone to watch the shop for him.

Rabindra Braharti and his two assistants, all 0-level normal men of the worker caste, are inspecting public cisterns and rain catches. Braharti has a set of keys that open stone cisterns and unlock the safety grilles over wells. He has a glass helm that holds enough air for a couple of minutes, several items with *continual light* cast on them, and lots of rope. His assistants lower him into the dark waters so that he can make inspections.

After the characters have seen this procedure once or twice, Rabindra is lowered into a particularly large cistern. Then something tugs the rope—and pulls in one of the assistants! Six giant toads live here.

Toads, giant (6): AC 7; HD 2 + 2; hp 9; #AT 1 bite; Dmg 1d4 + 1; MV 90' (30'); Save F1; ML 6; AL N; THAC0 17. The toads attack anyone who invades their territory. Adjust the number of toads according to the strength of the party. They have no treasure, but there are piles of garbage around them. If the PCs handle the garbage, they suffer losses of Charisma and may be regarded as untouchable.

Bhavan Nehru and his two fat brothers, Ghavan and Dhevin, have come to Dharsatra from the tiny village of Tagra, seeking work as chandlers (candle makers). Their tiny village cannot support them in their trade, which was their father's trade and his father's trade before him. They strike up conversations with foreigners about how difficult it is to get a place in the city, how broke they are, and so on.

These poor, obese, dumb-looking lads are really devil swine (from the Expert Rules). They don't know the city, but they've heard of the Kirtanta and want to join them. All they know about the Kirtanta is that they are wealthy, powerful, and have some sort of shapechanging ability. If the swine can kill and eat a group of powerful foreigners, that should improve their chances for membership.

The three swine have two gifts for the Kirtanta chief if they should find him. One is a *wand of polymorphing* with six charges left; the other is a *helm of alignment change*. They have had both items identified, and assume that their duplicitous

nature would impress a Kirtanta chief. If sufficiently intimidated, the swine tell everything they know about the Kirtanta, and they make up many lies as well.

If the need arises, they use the *wand* in self-defense. Remember that devil swine in the Hollow World cannot cast a *charm person* spell; however, these swine can change form in daylight.

Devil swine (3): AC 3/9; HD 9*; hp 25; #AT 1 gore or blow; Dmg 2d6 or weapon; MV 180' (60'), 120' (40') in human form; Save F9; SD harmed only by magical or silver weapons; ML 10; AL C; THAC0 10. Worker caste. Adjust the number of swine according to the PCs' strength. The swine retreat if their ambush attracts attention (unlikely in Dharsatra).

INVESTIGATION

The PCs, lured by their dreams, should be looking for a holy man, a samdu named Chatterjee, whose appearance and name they learned in the dream sequences of Chapter 2. They can track their quarry by the following methods.

1. They can approach and ask other samdus. The characters learn that Chatterjee can usually be found in the Temple of the Eight Sweet Winds in the center of town. They also hear a derisive comment: Chatterjee is too oriented to the ways of the world—he isn't tranquil enough for someone truly on the path. (This turns out all to the PCs' good!)

2. If they describe to any native Dharsatran the scene of the third dream, the native quickly identifies it as the Temple of the Eight Sweet Winds. Of course, the Temple is too holy for a murder like that to occur. . . .

3. Chatterjee has had dreams of his own as well. He has contacted his family; although they spurned him when he became a samdu, they trust his wisdom. If the group wanders the Warriors' Quarter, two men approach who look like younger, richer versions of Chatterjee. These young men, Chatterjee's nephews, tell the PCs to go to the Temple of the Eight Sweet Winds and seek out their uncle. If Chatterjee wants to speak to these foreigners, it must be for a good reason, but it's way too mysterious for them!

WHERE NEXT?

Let the players form an idea of life in Shahjapur, and let the characters either get into trouble with the caste system or avoid it. You may even want to make an early mention of the Kirtanta as dramatic foreshadowing. Soon after their arrival in Dharsatra, the PCs should notice the most prominent landmark around, at the city's exact center. This takes them to the Temple of Eight Sweet Winds, and Chapter 5.

When the Immortals decided to preserve a part of the culture of Sind, they also created a perfect symbol of that culture: the Temple of Eight Sweet Winds.

Situated in the center of Shahjapur, the Temple embodies the highest principles of Sindian architecture, aesthetics, geometry, and philosophy. Its alluring presence affects all who see it. Even the lowliest street sweeper is struck afresh by its beauty every day.

Buildings near the Temple are low; each successive ring of buildings is built higher, so as many windows as possible view the red sandstone octagon and its mysterious floating dome. Even the sprawling, filthy Domain of the Outcasts has a few 12-story tall tenements, so that even the most wretched can climb up and gaze upon this wonder.

Though the PCs see the Temple's great beauty, they cannot partake of its soothing and vitalizing properties as do the inhabitants. It does not resonate so perfectly with their values (unless, of course, they are from Sind in the Outer World).

Because of the Temple's perfection, every holy man and philosopher in Shahjapur is drawn to study here. Many practice complex spiritual disciplines here, trying to shut out all thoughts save those of the Temple. Thus, when they achieve understanding of the Temple's ideals, their values and outlook correspond with the original culture of Sind (circa 400 AC). They can return to their homes, maintaining the culture in its original form.

Some of the samdus reach a still higher state of awareness. They apprehend the eightfold principle of Sindian culture and are transported into the Temple's inaccessible floating dome (see the following description). There the Immortals may consent to *commune* directly with the samdus. Although the holy men do not achieve Immortal status, they develop a wisdom and scope of vision beyond ordinary mortals.

The man in the street, and in fact many of the samdus themselves, know nothing of this. It has been at least ten thousand sleeps since anyone achieved this feat. Since then dark forces have come to dwell in the Temple of Eight Sweet Winds.

THE SCENE

The central block of the city is a vast circular garden. Within this garden is a second circular garden on a higher tier, a third garden on a still higher tier, and so on. Within the eighth garden, towering above the surrounding city, stands the Temple of Eight Sweet Winds.

Flowers, trees, and brightly colored parrots grace this highest garden. The stairs between the tiers, the stone bridges over tiny lily ponds, and the benches and pathways display an exquisite beauty

found nowhere else in the Hollow World. Indeed, this place might well be mistaken for paradise—were it not for the throngs of worshippers.

Exterior

Within the eighth garden stands an eight-sided tower of thick red sandstone. Its walls reach a height of 240'.

Each wall has two openings. At the base of each side is a large trapezoidal doorway, inlaid with many-colored scenes demonstrating one of the eight cardinal virtues of samdu (see below). The second opening, near the top of the wall, is a large eye-shaped window permitting winds from every compass point to swirl inside, cooling the devotees and bearing away sweet incense on the breeze.

Above the roof, which seems to curve downward and inward, floats an onion-shaped dome of a smooth pink stone. Twenty yards of air separates the seamless dome from the inward curving roof. It appears that if the Immortal magic holding the dome up should ever fail, the dome would fit exactly into the roof's cavity.

Describe the exterior of the Temple to the players, in the most electrifying terms possible for their characters' backgrounds and personalities. Then read the following:

The magnificence of the Temple almost made you forget yourself and your quest. As you come to yourself and glance around the garden, you see two elements that look out of place.

Around the Temple, although not blocking the great doorways, are at least 100 samdus. They sit or stand in weird postures, gazing without a blink on this masterpiece of magic and art. Some stand on their heads. One holds his arm aloft—and has done so for so long that a parrot has nested in his outstretched hand. Still another lies on a bed of spikes with a huge rock on his chest.

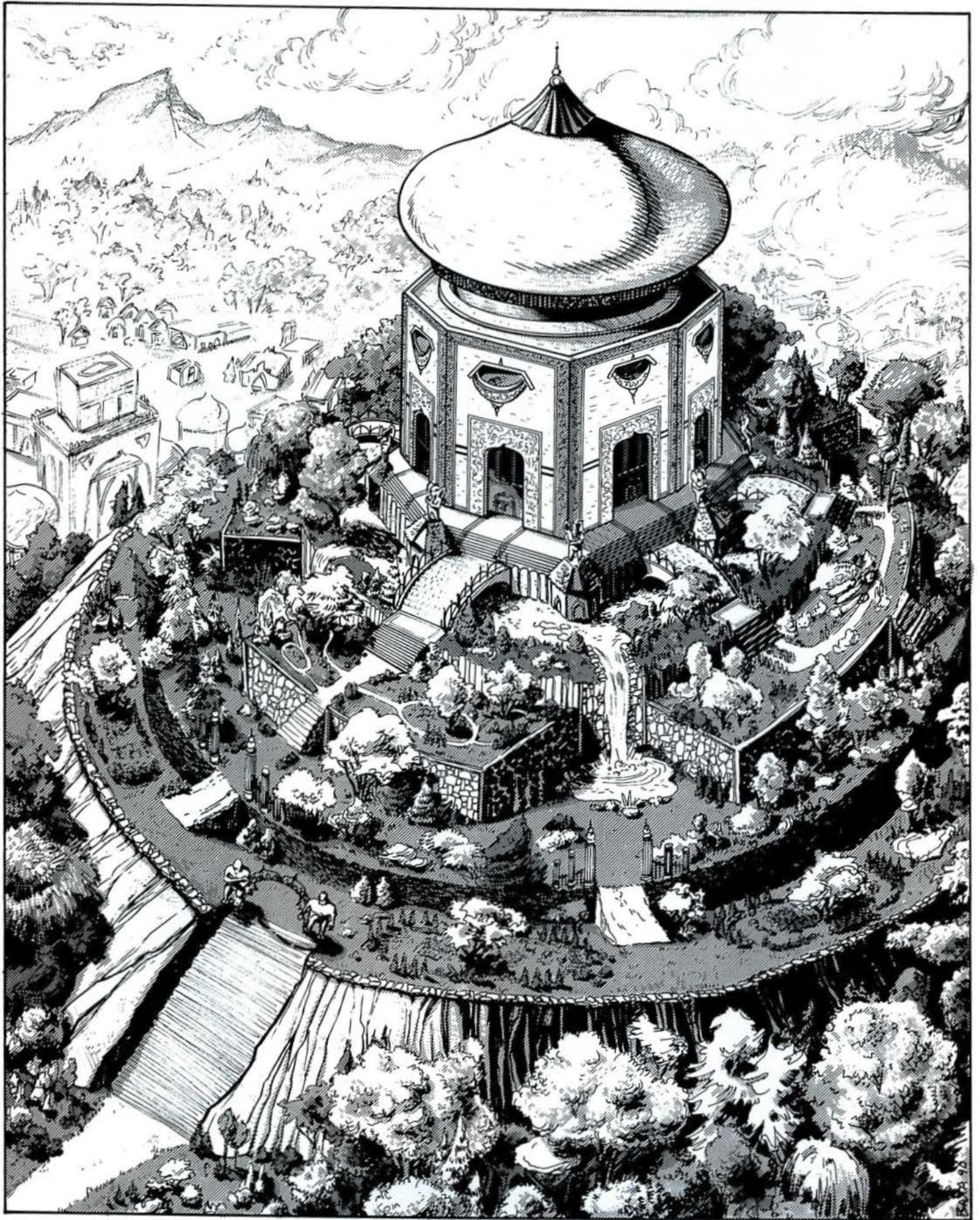
From within the Temple come clouds of marble dust and incense along with the sounds of hammering, sawing, and chiseling. Obviously a lot of renovation is going on.

INVESTIGATION

If the characters question the samdus, they receive polite but pointless lectures on the importance of "fixity of consciousness," "all reality is but an illusion," and so on.

Samdus: AC 9; HD 3-5; hp 7-20; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6; MV 120' (40'); Save C3-C5; ML 11; AL L or N; THAC0 19-18.

Other bystanders can tell the characters more. They believe that all the renovation within the Temple is the work of the priestly caste—holy men



devoted to the maintenance of the Temple. They have been working hard since clerics lost their spells. Perhaps if they renovate the Temple correctly, the divine balance will return!

People of all castes have brought food, drink, money, flowers, and home-crafted items to support the priests in their holy work. Yet though the priests labor ceaselessly, nothing has improved and the magic is still gone. No doubt it is fated to be so, the people say.

In reality most of the Temple priests have been replaced by the Kirtanta, who are altering the Temple in subtly evil ways. They are gradually turning the Temple, the symbol of Shahjapur's culture, into a symbol of Entropy.

Interior

Each of the eight doorways is surrounded by bas-reliefs demonstrating one of the Eight Virtues: to the North, Charity; Northwest, Knowledge; West, Fortitude; Southwest, Law; South, Benevolence; Southeast, Purity; East, Courage; and Northeast, Vigor.

In each of the sections stand statues portraying these virtues. The statues are in turn surrounded by small flowers and tiny incense burners placed there by devotees. Beyond this line of offerings stand chanting and praying worshippers.

Each virtue has its particular set of followers. For example, beggars crowd around the statue of Kudesha, Giver of Wealth, where they are receiving alms from wealthy merchants; sick and old people are making piteous appeals to Runar, Giver of Vigor; and elephant-headed Ganetra, Giver of Knowledge, is surrounded by scholars seeking his aid in finding lost texts. The atmosphere is hectic.

Scaffolding stands between and above the statues where the "priests" are working on the marble inlays behind canvas. Devotees place trays of food on the scaffolding, where young boys snatch it up and carry it to the workers.

Yet in the Temple's exact center, amid the din and confusion, one samdu sits cross-legged, eyes closed, meditating peacefully. The PCs recognize this man as Chatterjee, the man in their dreams. If the characters ignore him, have them recognize him when he is startled out of his meditation during the ensuing attack.

EVENTS

The Attack

A few moments after the characters arrive (or immediately after they recognize Chatterjee), the Kirtanta make their move.

Near the doorway of Knowledge stands the figure of Ganetra. This is a statue of an elephant-headed man, 16 feet tall, and made

of polished dark-green stone.

Suddenly small red flowers descend from the roof of the Temple, apparently materializing in midair. The red flowers, tiny roses, vanish as soon as they touch anything. Flute music seems to come from everywhere. As you watch, the statue begins to slowly flex its trunk. The worshippers give ecstatic cries and kneel down.

The statue raises its arms in benediction. Chanting and prayer stops at the other shrines as people turn to watch. Some people are running toward the statue, a few are running out of the Temple, but most are spellbound.

The figure raises its trunk and trumpets a deafening note. It makes your ears ring, and trickles of blood run from your noses. Some of the scaffolding across the Temple collapses. Fortunately, no one was on it, but those beneath it barely got away without injury.

But instead of running, now many people are actually praying harder to this terrible thing! The samdu who sat in the middle of the Temple has stirred from his meditations. He looks very frightened, because the statue has started to walk right toward him.

The hidden leader of the Kirtanta has cast a *phantasmal force* to create the rain of tiny roses. These flowers are considered sacred to Ganetra, and impress the populace. Four flutists concealed behind canvas dropcloths provide the musical sound effects. Both effects end after the blast.

Irila Kaze has replaced the non-magical statue of Ganetra with a special golem of her own construction. Its first mission is to kill Chatterjee—not because Kaze is aware of him as a threat, but simply because she despises his calm presence.

But the golem's main function is to disrupt the culture of Shahjapur. After all, if something this terrible happens in the Temple of Eight Sweet Winds, ultimate symbol of balance, then nothing, *nothing* is certain. It is, for her, a masterstroke of cultural terrorism.

Fighting the Ganetra golem: For the golem's statistics, see "New Monsters" in the appendix.

The golem is relatively slow-moving. If the characters run up, avoid the golem's *slow* effect, and drag Chatterjee from the Temple, they can get away. The golem seeks out Chatterjee if he is within 240 yards, but it has no other tracking powers.

However, the golem then wanders around the city, destroying everything in its path. Its sonic attack (equivalent to a *horn of blasting*) does not affect the Temple, but a single blast brings down a block of ramshackle buildings in the Workers' Quarter, and two or three blasts can bring down any other building in Dharsatra.

The best thing for the city is to keep the golem within or near the Temple area. The golem re-

sponds to taunts, ranged attacks, and other lures. In this way, clever PCs may maneuver it into some trap, such as a fall from one of the garden walls to a lower level. Such a fall would not shatter the golem, but might cripple it. Then the PCs can wear it down from a distance or, more heroically, try to shatter it with massive blows.

Although there are almost 40 Kirtanta working here, they do not join in the golem's attack or come to its defense. But if characters who are fighting (or fleeing) actually come onto their scaffolding, a doppelganger may try to take a character's place.

Consequences of the Attack

If the PCs don't rescue Chatterjee from the golem, Chatterjee uses his samdu training to *feign death*. When the golem is safely gone, he rises up and seeks the PCs.

Others may also seek them. If the PCs used magic unknown in the Hollow World, the leader of the Kirtanta tries to kidnap the spellcaster, hoping to secure the knowledge for himself.

A few hours after the attack, the leader of the Kirtanta uses a *rope of climbing* (see Chapter 7) to enter the Temple's floating dome and report to Irila Kaze. (He hides his disappearance from the Temple behind a canvas sheet hanging from the scaffolding). If the characters did anything except run away, the paranoid Kaze suspects them. She gives orders that they be followed; the assassins must destroy the PCs if they appear to endanger Thanatos's scheme (for instance, by collecting items relating to the Yantra of the Emerald River).

Meanwhile, if the Ganetra golem goes undefeated, it wipes out large portions of the Workers' Quarter of Dharsatra. After an hour of devastation it wanders over to the Warriors' (Administrators') Quarter—and then the city guards are called out in force! After much struggle and many fatalities, the guardsmen finally topple and destroy the golem.

Although the fatalistic Shahjapuri accept these strange events as destiny working out its course, many assume that the end of time has come. Businesses close as people send their final farewells to one another. Property grows very cheap, and the people crowd the streets, hoping to apologize to someone they might have hurt in times past. Some wealthy families give away all they own; some beggars become wealthy. Many seek out members of the priestly caste to ask what is going on. A few begin to demand that the priests be driven away. After all, if the priests had kept the faith, they would have spells and certainly the Temple wouldn't have gone to chaos!

The Kirtanta begin to infiltrate all castes, classes, and institutions. Within months, they will control Dharsatra and, by extension, Shahjapur. All this happens, unless the PCs act.

Words of Wisdom

At a safe time and place, Chatterjee tells the characters his story (see the Appendix). He nods understandingly at the PCs' own story—or, if they don't tell it, he appears to know it anyway.

"I was visited in sleep by the undying Murtijai, Lord of Thieves," Chatterjee says. (Murtijai is a Shahjapuri name for one aspect of Asterius.) "He said that his fellow spirits have vanished, but that you are able to restore them. Murtijai revealed to me the solution to your quest: the Yantra of the Emerald River."

As Chatterjee can tell the PCs, a *yantra* is a diagram that the samdus use to meditate. Yantras have different functions and magical powers. Chatterjee has used many yantras in his spiritual explorations, but he doesn't know how this one would be useful to the PCs, nor has he ever heard of an "Emerald River." (No one else in Shahjapur recognizes the term, either.) Nonetheless, Chatterjee is convinced that the yantra can in some way let the PCs contact the Immortals.

The old guru cannot turn over the job entirely, for the PCs need his wisdom and training to activate the yantra.

"Heed now the components you are needing to construct the yantra: On a drawing surface bathed in the sweat of a beggar king, you must be drawing the diagram with a paste of fangs of the white cobra. All the while, you must chant a mantra.

"I am being most sorry to say that I am not knowing the diagram, or the mantra. But among the seekers of truth, great Amravati is said to be knowing all symbols and mantras. You must be seeking him out."

WHERE NEXT?

Once the PCs have talked to Chatterjee and realize that they must construct the yantra to proceed further, send them to the next chapter. There they undertake to collect the cobra fangs, the sweat of a beggar king, and the diagram and mantra they need.



This chapter details the PCs' search for the components of the magical yantra. These include the powdered fangs of a white cobra, used to draw the pattern of the yantra; the perspiration of a Beggar King, used to wash the floor of the floating dome of the Temple of Eight Sweet Winds (on which the yantra is to be drawn); and a yogin named Amravati, who knows how to diagram the yantra. Each component is keyed to a separate mini-scenario, each set in a different section of Dharsatra. The scenarios can be played in any order.

If the party consists of only low-level PCs at this point in the adventure, or if their strength has been significantly reduced from the events of previous chapters, consider adjusting some of the encounters in this chapter to make them less deadly. For instance, reduce the number of monsters, increase the likelihood that adversaries retreat or withdraw, or make traps and weapons less lethal.

TYPICAL CITIZENS

Unless otherwise indicated, use these statistics for NPCs encountered in Dharsatra. Feel free to vary their hit points, weaponry, and alignment.

Typical villager: Normal man; AC 9; hp 3; AT 1; D 1-2 (rock or small club); MV 120' (40'); Save as normal man; AL N; THAC0 20.

Above-average villager: 1st level fighter; AC 9; HD 1; hp 6; AT 1; D 1-4 (dagger); MV 120' (40'); Save F1; AL N; THAC0 19.

Exceptional villager: 2nd level fighter; AC 8; HD 2; hp 12; AT 1; D 1d6 (scimitar); MV 120' (40'); Save F2; AL N; THAC0 19.

The typical statistics can be used for beggars, laborers, and other ordinary citizens. Use the above-average statistics for artisans, merchants, and other characters more formidable than a typical citizen. The exceptional statistics are reserved for local officials, administrators, and other noteworthy citizens.

Reactions of the Citizens

The citizens of Dharsatra tend to regard the odd-looking PCs with a mixture of curiosity and deference. Assuming the PCs are friendly and courteous, most citizens speak with them freely.

However, numerous cultural and religious taboos prevail in Dharsatra. If the PCs openly violate these taboos, the citizens' reactions will become decidedly negative. At best, the offended citizens may refuse to speak with them at all. At worst, the citizens may decide that violence is necessary to teach the PCs some manners.

The taboos observed in Dharsatra, and how strictly they are enforced, are up to you. Some possible taboos:

- Females must walk behind their male companions.
- Speaking with untouchables for more than a few seconds is forbidden.
- When addressing a priest, citizens and visitors

alike must stand downwind.

- Eating meat is forbidden.
- Fires may not be lighted in public, except during holy ceremonies.

Usually, when a PC violates a taboo for the first time, he is politely but sternly reprimanded. If a PC persists in violating a taboo, or if he shoplifts or commits a similar crime, he and his companions are attacked by a contingent of law enforcement officials (or angry citizens). Such a contingent typically consists of 2d4 above-average villagers plus 1d4 exceptional villagers. The NPC contingent attacks the PCs with the intention of killing them, ignoring protests of innocence.

If the PCs escape and elude the NPCs for about 10 rounds, the pursuers give up the chase. If the PCs engage the NPCs in combat and half of the NPCs lose half or more of their hit points, all of the surviving NPCs flee.

FANGS OF THE WHITE COBRA

To obtain white cobra fangs, the PCs must first find a white cobra. No shopkeeper in the city carries cobras or fangs. There are no zoos or museums housing such creatures. Drawn by the excessive rat population, hungry cobras are relatively common in the garbage-strewn alleys of the slums, but these all prove to be the common brown and black varieties. Cobras also lair in the marshes and woodlands surrounding the city, but none are of the type the PCs need.

The best-known lair of white cobras is near a large mangrove tree by the Monbobo River just outside the city's Warriors' Quarter. The PCs can find out about this lair from an explorer or hunter, who tells the PCs where to find the mangrove tree, and also tells them that the tree is supposedly haunted, warning them to be careful; he has no other information.

The characters might also learn the cobras' location from a friendly *pandit* (wise man). He also tells them that the mangrove tree is a religious shrine, admonishing them to be respectful. He has no details about the tree or its worshippers, admitting that he's never actually visited the tree himself.

Finally, the PCs can learn about the white cobra lair as a result of the Greedy Guide encounter in the Optional Encounters section below.

When the PCs learn about the mangrove tree, proceed to the "Cobra Tree" section.

Optional Encounters

Depending on the actions of the characters, their perceived caste, and your own preferences, the PCs may experience some, all, or none of the following encounters. The Helpful Merchant and Bania's Offer encounters most likely occur in the Artisans' Quarter, whereas the Workers' Quarter is the best setting for the Greedy Guide encounter. Optional encounters can take place in any order.

Helpful Merchant

A smiling man pushing a ramshackle wooden cart approaches the PCs. He wears a long robe made of *dungri* (a rough fabric favored by the poor) and has a thin black moustache and short black hair. He bows to the PCs, then identifies himself as the merchant Obak Ayub-din (use above-average citizen statistics). Obak says he overheard the PCs asking about cobras. "If you are to hunt such creatures, then I have several items that you will most definitely require. I have many debts to pay, so I am forced to offer them at bargain prices. My bad luck is your good fortune."

Obak has the following items for sale. He asks the listed prices, but can be talked into half-price.

Three large sacks made of heavy burlap. Price: 2 Pr (2 cp) each. "Perfect for holding captured cobras. They cannot bite through this material." One sack is large enough to hold a 7-foot snake. And he's right—snakes can't bite through them.

Four snake snares. Each snare is a 6-foot bamboo pole with a heavy cord strung through it. The cord forms a loop at one end of the pole. "By carefully draping the loop over a snake's head, then pulling the cord tight on the other end, the snake is safely restrained." Price: 4 Pr each. The snares work as described; when using the snare to catch a snake, make a normal attack roll with a +1 bonus. The flimsy snares are useless as weapons. Since the snares are quite simple to make, clever PCs could probably manufacture their own after seeing these.

Poison salve. This is a thick milky liquid that smells like rotten fish. Obak has three doses. "If you are bitten, rub this on the wound. It will make you feel much better." Price: 1 Kh (1 sp) per dose. The salve numbs the pain of a bite, but doesn't neutralize the poison—snake bite victims die just as quickly and as assuredly without the salve. If questioned, Obak sheepishly admits this, then quickly reduces the price to 2 Pr. If the PCs don't buy any of the salve, Obak gives them a dose as a gift if they buy anything else.

Obak doesn't know where to locate white cobras. He has no other useful information.

Bania's Offer

A thin man, wearing only a ragged *dhoti* (a long cloth worn between the legs and wrapped around the waist), sits cross-legged on a dirty blanket, playing a slow, eerie melody on a wooden flute. Before him, a small cobra rises from a basket of woven reeds, swaying in time with the movements of the flute. A clay cup containing a few piasters sits next to the snake basket. The cobra's scales are dull white.

If the PCs approach, the man's eyes dart nervously from side to side, but he continues to play. He does not stop playing to answer questions. If they drop a coin in the clay cup, he nods in acknowledgement, but doesn't interrupt his performance. If they take his flute, he continues swaying silently. (His motion, not his music, hypnotizes the cobra; snakes are deaf.)

If the PCs study the cobra, they notice that its scales are not really white. Rather, the snake is actually dull gray, covered with a chalky dust.

Meeting with a bania: "A fascinating display, is it not?" says a rasping voice behind the PCs. The voice belongs to a short, fat man wearing a silk suit and a cloth turban (use above-average citizen statistics). Two beefy thugs (use exceptional citizen statistics) with bald heads and grim expressions flank the fat man.

The fat man snaps his fingers, and one of the thugs scoops the coins from the clay cup. He tosses two coins back into the cup and gives the rest to the fat man. The snake charmer nods to the fat man while continuing to play.

The fat man eyes the PCs, then smiles. "It is always a pleasure to meet foreign visitors," he says. "I am Chandkhan Taya. This talented performer works for me."

Taya is one of the city's most notorious *banias*, or moneylenders. Although he works strictly within the boundaries of the law, he exploits his clients mercilessly. Dozens of artisans, including this snake charmer, are hopelessly indebted to Taya. Accompanied by his bodyguards, Taya makes daily visits to his clients to collect interest payments.

Taya engages the PCs in friendly small talk, asking their names, their homelands, and their business in the city. If asked, Taya says he's a local businessman of modest means. He introduces his associates as Barwani and Rutirah, "my bodyguards. Our city, I'm afraid, is filled with criminals."

About the cobras: If the PCs ask about the white substance on the cobra, Taya laughs. "I won't pretend I can fool people as sophisticated as you. The bottom of the basket is filled with chalk dust to make the snake look white. White snakes bring in more money than common gray ones."

If the PCs themselves mention anything about white cobras, Taya's interest perks. "A genuine white cobra would increase revenue considerably," he says. "I would pay handsomely for such a creature." Taya says he will pay 2 Kh (2 sp) for a healthy white cobra. Taya will not supply men or equipment, nor has he any idea where to find such creatures.

If the PCs decline to do business with Taya, he shrugs and wishes them luck; the encounter is over. If they express interest, Taya tells them to meet him or his emissaries here any time; for every healthy white cobra they bring him, he will pay 2 Kh. Taya is telling the truth. If the PCs return here with healthy cobras from the Cobra Tree encounter, he pays the promised fee.

Though Taya doesn't know where to find the white cobras, he directs them to a specific location in the Workers' Quarter where they can find a man named Bhar Jawah, "the finest guide in all of Dharsatra. If anyone can find white cobras, he can." If the PCs have previously experienced the "Greedy Guide" encounter below, they've already met Bhar; otherwise, if they follow Taya's directions, proceed to "Greedy Guide."

If the PCs don't mention why they want a white cobra, Taya asks them. Taya accepts whatever the PCs choose to tell him. If they tell him about the fangs, Taya offers to have Barwani defang the cobra for

them. He gestures to Barwani, who then snatches the chalky cobra from the basket and squeezes its head to reveal its fangless mouth.

"All of the snakes are defanged for the safety of the performers," says Taya. "All it takes is a quick snip of the scissors." (Taya will honor this offer to defang any healthy white cobras captured by the PCs. Barwani will grab the snake behind the head, squeeze open its mouth, then snip out its fangs with a pair of scissors. Taya will give the fangs to the PCs.)

Loan sharking: Before the PCs leave, Taya offers to lend them money. "I know that travelers are often short of funds," he says. "I would be happy to help you out." Taya loans the PCs any amount of money up to 10 Kh (10 sp), with a minimum loan of 2 Pr (2 cp). If the PCs accept the loan, they must repay it in its entirety, plus 50 percent (that is, they must repay a loan of 2 Pr at 3 pr), in two sleeps!

The PCs can find Taya here most any time to make the payment. If the PCs don't pay within two sleeps, then Barwani and Rutirah, along with six companions (use exceptional citizen statistics), hunt down the PCs within 48 hours, if they're within city limits. Barwani demands twice the amount of the loan. If the PCs don't pay, Barwani and his companions attack the PCs; the NPCs fight until half of their number has lost half or more of their hit points, at which time all surviving NPCs flee. If the PCs escape and elude the NPCs for 10 rounds, the NPCs give up the chase.

Greedy Guide

After the PCs have spent a few hours asking about white cobras, they are directed to a specific location in the Workers' Quarter where they can find a man named Bhar Jawah, alleged to be the finest guide in the city. The PCs may also be directed to Bhar as a result of the "Bania's Offer" encounter, above.

Bhar's home is a small but tidy wooden lean-to with a tin roof. A small man with a thin nose and big black eyes (use above-average citizen statistics) sits contentedly near the entrance of the lean-to, whistling a pleasant tune while he stirs an iron cooking pot. Spotting the PCs, he smiles broadly and rises to his feet. "Welcome, strangers," he says, bowing politely. "How am I being of service?"

Hiring the guide: If the PCs say they're looking for a guide, the man invites them to have a seat on the ground near the cooking pot so that they may discuss business while they eat. He introduces himself as Bhar Jawah, then asks the PCs' names, their business in Dharsatra, and how he can help them. Bhar offers each PC a wooden bowl of hot *dal* (a watery lentil soup) and a stone plate of *chapattis* (chewy wheat cakes). The food is delicious and quite filling.

If the PCs express an interest in white cobras, Bhar nods and says that such creatures do indeed exist, "But it is taking an experienced hunter to find them. White cobras are being quite elusive. Fortunately, I am knowing where to find them." Bhar says his fee is 2 Pr (2 cp) per hour, payable in advance; the characters may hire him for as long as they like, with a minimum fee of 24 Pr (24 cp). The fee is not nego-

tiable. "And please be understanding—I am agreeing only to be showing you to the cobras. You are on your own if you are wishing to be catching one."

If the PCs decline to hire Bhar, he shrugs and wishes them luck; this encounter is over.

If the PCs agree to hire him, Bhar asks when they'd like to get started—he's ready any time, even now. Whenever the PCs decide to begin the hunt, Bhar asks for his fee. After he's paid, Bhar gathers a walking stick, a cloth bedroll ("in case we are needing to spend a sleep in the wilderness"), two sleeps' supply of food and water (for himself only), and a small wooden cage containing a weasel-like animal about a foot and a half long with stiff brown hair. "This is being Sacha," says Bhar. "She is being an excellent snake hunter."

Sacha (mongoose): AC 6; HD 1; hp 7; AT 1; Dmg 1d6 (bite); MV 180' (60'); Save F1; AL N; THACO 19; SA +3 to attack rolls when fighting snakes; when an attack against a snake is successful, the mongoose attaches to the snake's body and chews, automatically inflicting 1d6 points of damage per round thereafter.

If the PCs don't have suitable gear for a wilderness trek, Bhar leads them to merchants in the Artisans' Quarter where they can purchase whatever they like. A bedroll costs 3 Pr (3 cp), a sleep's worth of rations costs 2 Pr (2 cp), and a small tent costs 2 Kh (2 sp). If the PCs want to buy snake-hunting equipment, Bhar takes them to the "Helpful Merchant" (see the encounter above).

Wild cobra chase: When everyone is supplied, Bhar leads them to a wilderness area about three miles from the outskirts of the Warriors' Quarter. He says their best chance of finding a white cobra is to look for rat holes along the banks of streams ("Rats are being the cobra's favorite food") and in areas filled with rotten vegetation ("where they are liking to make their nests").

With Bhar in the lead, the PCs spend several hours tramping through high weeds and thick mud, poking in rat holes and prodding piles of rotten leaves. They turn up nothing. Bhar encourages them to continue the search.

Although Bhar is indeed a skilled guide, he intends to draw out the hunt as long as possible—the longer they hunt, the more money he makes. He cheerfully reminds everyone when it's time to pay him again, and he assures them that they're getting closer to their prey. "This is being an excellent location for white cobras. We ought to be finding one in just another hour or two."

To keep up his patrons' interest, Bhar peppers his conversation with the following facts about cobras. All are true, applying to common and white cobras alike:

- "Many people are mistakenly believing the cobra to be aggressive. Nothing could be further from the truth. They are being actually quite cowardly. If they can, they are always running from a fight. Ever be seeing a cobra flare its hood? It does not mean anything—just a cobra's way of bluffing."

- “There are being few creatures more poisonous than a cobra. Even the babies can be killing you. If you get bit, you are feeling dizzy and sick to your stomach for about 10 minutes before you are fainting. In another 10 minutes, you are being dead. And you be forgetting about sucking out the poison—it is only taking about a hundredth of a drop to be killing you, and you are not able to suck it all out.”

- “The best way to be catching a cobra is to be pinning its head to the ground with a forked stick. Then you are reaching down and grabbing him behind the head—hold tight! Then you are putting him in a bag, and you get him. But be making sure you are using a heavy bag. Cobras can be biting through a cloth bag like it is being made of tissue.”

The lair: When Bhar senses the PCs are reaching the limit of their patience, he decides the time has come to produce. He leads the searchers to the bank of a stream and looks for a large hole. Within an hour of searching, Bhar locates a four-foot diameter hole. He studies the hole, then smiles at the PCs. “Is being a cobra lair,” he says. “Don’t be knowing what color it is, but we’ll soon be finding out.” Bhar opens Sacha’s cage and releases her. The mongoose dashes into the opening.

Ten minutes pass, then twenty. Bhar grows concerned. “Sacha should have been being back by now.” He listens at the hole. “I am not hearing anything.”

Obviously worried, Bhar announces he’s going in after his mongoose. “Be waiting here,” he says. “I am being right back.” If one or more PCs insist on accompanying him, Bhar agrees. The rest of the encounter plays out as described below.

About five minutes after Bhar enters the hole, he shrieks in desperation from deep underground. “Help! I am spraining my ankle! And there is being a cobra down here! Hurry!” If the PCs listen at the hole, they hear the faint sounds of hissing.

If the PCs decline to enter the hole, the shrieking and hissing stops 15 minutes later; the cobra has attacked Bhar and killed him. The PCs can still enter the hole to recover Bhar’s body (and possibly engage the cobras, as described below), but the encounter is over. They can’t find the mongoose, and they’ll have to find some other way to locate a white cobra.

If they go in: The hole leads to a passage that winds about 15 feet into the earth, ending in a 20-foot diameter cavern. The passage opens in the south wall of the cavern. Against the west wall is a large nest of pebbles and refuse; a hissing gray cobra has risen from the debris, weaving from side to side with its hood spread. Bhar huddles on the floor against the east wall, clutching his right ankle.

When Bhar entered the cavern, his footsteps alerted the cobra; when the cobra rose from its nest, Bhar panicked and tripped, spraining his ankle. A one-foot diameter hole opens near the base of the north wall. Sacha left the cavern through this hole, which leads to the surface about 30 yards distant. Like all mongooses, Sacha spots prey by sight, not by smell; when she entered the cavern, she failed to see

the cobra and kept going through the north hole.

Cobra: AC 7; HD 1*; hp 7; AT 1; D 1-3 (bite) + poison; MV 90’ (30’); Save F1; AL N; THAC0 18; SA poison (victim must save vs. poison or die in 1-10 turns).

Bhar says he can’t walk; the PCs will have to drag him out of the cavern. “Don’t be going near the cobra!” he warns. “If you are not bothering it, it will not be attacking!”

As soon as any PC moves toward Bhar, the PC steps on the pebbles covering the floor, which crunch under his feet. The sound alerts six baby cobras hidden in the nest. The six babies, each about a foot long, rise beside their mother, spread their hoods, and begin to hiss.

Baby cobras (6): AC 8; 2 hp each; AT 1; D 1-2 (bite) + poison; MV 30’ (10’); Save F1; AL N; THAC0 19; SA poison (victim must save vs. poison or die in 1-10 turns).

If the PCs don’t come within five feet of the cobra nest, neither the mother cobra nor the babies will attack, though they will continue to sway and hiss. By staying near the east wall, they can safely drag Bhar out of the cavern. Bhar doesn’t weigh very much; any PC with a Strength of 10 or better can move him easily.

If the PCs come within five feet of the cobra nest, or if they attack or otherwise intentionally disturb any of the cobras, all of the cobras leave the nest and attack. The cobras fight to the death; however, they never leave the cavern, nor move further than five feet from the nest.

If the PCs destroy all the cobras, they can search the nest. It contains only rodent bones; there is nothing of interest.

Goodbye, Bhar: Once rescued, Bhar thanks the PCs profusely. Using his walking stick as a crutch, he rises to his feet and takes a few tentative steps (he was too frightened to attempt this in the cavern). While Bhar practices walking, Sacha scampers out of the brush and returns to his side. “Where have you been going?” reprimands Bhar, as the mongoose rubs against his leg.

Bhar has had enough adventure for one sleep. “I am going home. If you are still being interested in white cobras, I am knowing where you can be finding a whole family of them. Er, it is just occurring to me, that is.” He tells the characters about a mangrove tree near the bank of the Monbobobo River, about five miles from their current location. “The white cobras are living under the tree. It is being a religious shrine. I am never going there, so I am not knowing much about it.” Bhar has no more information about the tree or the cobras. If the PCs follow his directions, proceed to the “Cobra Tree” section below.

Bhar refuses to accompany the PCs to the cobra tree. He also sulkily declines any offer to help him get home. While he uses the walking stick crutch, he finds the mongoose cage too awkward to carry. “Are you being interested in buying Sacha?” he asks. “She might be being helpful to you.” (Bhar has no sentimental attachment to the mongoose—he can always get another.)

Bhar asks for 1 Kh (1 sp) for Sacha, but he'll settle for as little as 10 Pr (10 cp).

Cobra Tree

A 75-foot tall mangrove tree rises from a barren field near the bank of the Monbobobo River, its rancid water polluted with raw sewage and rotting garbage dumped by careless Dharsatra residents. A dozen white cobras with fiery red eyes writhe near the trunk of the tree, their hoods spread and their thick bodies erect. The cobras are about seven feet long. The cobras always remain within a 50-foot radius of the tree; for convenience, this area is called the Snake Circle.

White cobras (12): AC 6; HD 2*; hp 15 each; AT 1; D 1-4 + poison; MV 90' (30'); Save F1; AL N; THAC0 18; SA poison (victim must save vs. Poison or die in 1-10 turns).

Just outside the Snake Circle, dozens of men and women (use typical citizen statistics) sit on the ground and stare blankly towards the tree. The people are emaciated and sickly, with bony bodies and protruding bellies. Several people lie motionless on the ground, and a number of human skeletons litter the area. All of the people and skeletons are within a 150-foot radius of the tree; for convenience, this area is called the Acolyte Circle.

A crowd of nearly 200 people from all castes (use typical citizen statistics) surround the Acolyte Circle, straining to see the writhing cobras. The crowd always remains outside the Acolyte Circle; for convenience, the area occupied by the crowd is called the Observation Area.

Occasionally, one of the crowd dashes through the Observation Area, winds his way through the bodies in the Acolyte Circle, and tosses a rat into the Snake Circle. While the man dashes back to the Observation Area, the hungry cobra buries its fangs in the rat, then gulps down the dying rodent.

Shortly after the PCs arrive, they see a man in the Observation Area walk confidently through the Acolyte Circle and into the Snake Circle; the cobras hiss and recoil, but don't strike. The man climbs the tree and straddles a high limb. A murmur ripples through the crowd as the man raises his hands to the sky, then slowly climbs back down. The man now seems dazed; he staggers through the Snake Circle, then collapses into the Acolyte Circle. With great effort, the man pulls himself to a sitting position and begins to stare blankly towards the tree. The crowd erupts in a roar of approval.

Questioning the Crowd

The PCs can question anyone in the Observation Area. They answer as follows and will not elaborate.

What is this place? What is the purpose of the tree and the cobras?: "This is the sacred tree of the omniscient Jautama, the chosen disciple of the Immortal Ilsundal. The serpents are the sons and daughters of Jautama. We have come to worship." (The worshippers have the story wrong; see the Non-Believer section below for the truth about Jautama and the tree.)

Who are those people (referring to those in the

Acolyte Circle)? What's happening to them?: "They are the acolytes of Jautama who have bound with his spirit in the sacred tree. Their death here assures them eternal happiness in the afterlife."

Why don't you bind with the spirit of Jautama and take your place among the acolytes?: "When the time is right, we will all find peace with Jautama." (Actually, most of those in the Observation Area lack the courage to approach the tree.)

Examining the Acolytes

The PCs can examine any of the acolytes if they wish. The acolytes ignore the PCs, continuing to stare at the tree. Any PC who makes a successful Intelligence check realizes that the acolytes are starving themselves to death. The acolytes refuse all offers of food and water, clamping their jaws tightly together. (When a potential acolyte climbs the mangrove tree, the spirit in the tree overwhelms his mind, compelling him to sit in the Acolyte Circle where he will eventually die of starvation. See the Non-Believer section below for more about the tree spirit.) *Dispel magic* has no effect on the enchanted acolytes, but *remove curse* negates the enchantment as described below.

If the PCs carry an acolyte out of the Acolyte Circle within 10 minutes of his enchantment (that is, within 10 minutes after the acolyte climbs out of the tree), the enchantment is immediately negated. The former acolyte has no memory of anything that happened after he climbed the tree. However, if the PCs carry an acolyte out of the Acolyte Circle who has been enchanted for more than 10 minutes, the acolyte remains enchanted. At the earliest opportunity, the acolyte staggers back to the Acolyte Circle and resumes staring at the tree.

The Non-Believer

Before the PCs have a chance to approach the tree, a voice rings out through the crowd. "Cease this blasphemy!" cries the voice. "You must leave this evil place!" The voice belongs to an aged man with a head of curly gray hair and a troubled face. He wears a white cotton robe and carries a staff of black wood.

The crowd ignores the man, who becomes increasingly frustrated. "Won't anyone listen to me?" he pleads. "Please. . . before it's too late!" He spots the PCs and hurries towards them. "I beg you," he says. "You must hear me out!"

If the PCs ignore the aged man, he advances toward the tree as described below. If the PCs agree to listen, he identifies himself Haja Rai, "a true priest of Ilsundal." Haja says that the cobra tree is occupied by the evil spirit of a blasphemer named Jautama. "These people are being deluded by a cruel fable. This is not the way to find peace. This tree does not represent Ilsundal." (Haja speaks the truth.)

Haja Rai: 2nd level cleric; AC 9; hp 6; #AT 1; D 1-4 (staff); MV 120' (40'); Save C2; AL G; THAC0 19. Spell: *remove fear*.

If asked, Haja tells the story of the tree. A hundred years ago, he explains, a man named Jautama

Dhirshu was rejected from the priesthood for disobedience. The bitter Jautama came to this mangrove tree and, in a fit of anger, renounced Ilsundal as a false entity.

"Ilsundal responded by transforming Jautama into a loathsome serpent spirit," says Haja, "and binding the spirit to the tree. A family of white cobras were also bound to the tree, commanded to serve as Jautama's congregation." As the old cobras die, the offspring take their place. "Over the years, the legend of Jautama has become corrupted by a cult of well-meaning but misinformed followers. They believe that Jautama promises them eternal life, when in fact he delivers nothing but an empty death."

The demonstration: When he finishes speaking with the PCs, Haja turns to the crowd. "This is a false patron that you worship!" he cries. "Watch, and I will demonstrate how one who knows the true Ilsundal can resist the lure of the evil Jautama!"

Haja determinedly marches past the motionless bodies in the Acolyte Circle and through the hissing serpents in the Snake Circle. If the PCs try to stop Haja, he tells them to stand clear. "Ilsundal will protect me," he says with assurance.

Haja climbs the tree and sits on the limb. He sits passively for a moment, then grimaces and clamps his hands to his ears. He climbs back down the tree and stumbles into the Acolyte Circle, his face expressionless, his eyes glassy and lifeless. He sits on the ground and stares blankly towards the tree; he has succumbed to the enchantment of the tree. Haja remains enchanted unless the PCs pull him from the Acolyte Circle within 10 minutes; if they do, the enchantment is negated, and Haja has no memory of what transpired after he climbed the tree. Visibly shaken by the experience, Haja flees the area as fast as he can, never to be seen again.

What Next?

What happens next depends on the actions of the PCs:

Climbing the tree: A PC who climbs the tree and sits on a limb hears a strange sound in his head, like that of a hundred hissing serpents mixed with a cacophony of whistles. The sound persists for one round. The PC must make a successful save vs. Spell or become completely deaf for the next 1-4 turns. (Ordinarily, hearing this sound causes the victim to become an enchanted acolyte of the tree spirit; fortunately for the PCs, only natives of Dharsatra are susceptible to the enchantment.)

The PCs attempt to catch or kill a white cobra: Refer to the "Cobra Catch" section below for details. Three rounds after the PCs make their initial attempt to catch or kill a cobra, the Acolyte Reaction is triggered; two rounds later, the Tree Spirit is released from the tree (see pertinent sections below).

The PCs attempt to damage the tree: Proceed immediately to the "Tree Spirit" section. Three rounds after the PCs make their initial attempt to damage the tree, the Acolyte Reaction is triggered (see below).

Cobra Catch

The white cobras are nervous and easily frightened, making them reluctant combatants at best. They cannot fight as a team, nor do they leave the Snake Circle. Typically, a cobra attempts one strike at an attacker, then retreats as quickly as possible to one of three small holes near the base of the tree. All of the holes lead 15 feet into the ground, ending in a 20-foot diameter cavern that serves as the cobras' lair. As soon as one cobra is attacked, the remaining cobras will attempt to slither away into their lair as quickly as possible.

If a cobra is restrained or is prevented from escaping into its lair, it fights to the death. Similarly, if the PCs find a way to follow a cobra into its lair (for instance, by consuming a *potion of diminution*) the cornered serpent fights to the death.

Other relevant information:

- No one in the Observation Area helps the PCs catch a cobra. They watch with curiosity throughout.

- A PC can pin a cobra to the ground with a forked stick or similar object if he makes a successful Dexterity check. Otherwise, the snake wriggles free. If the PC (or a companion) now succeeds in a Strength check, he can safely put the snake in a bag or other suitable container. Otherwise, the snake wriggles free and tries to bite the PC.

- If the PC puts the snake in a bag that is not made of heavy burlap or equally coarse material, the snake gets one chance to bite through the bag. Make a normal attack roll; the bite is directed at the PC holding the bag.

- If the PCs have Sacha the mongoose (from the "Greedy Guide" encounter), Sacha attacks ferociously, attempting to kill as many snakes as it can. The mongoose fights to the death. Don't bother with attack rolls in the fight between Sacha and the cobras; instead, assume the mongoose has a 90% chance of killing the cobra and a 10% chance of being killed itself. Sacha also pursues fleeing cobras into their lair; all but one cobra in the lair (Sacha's victim) return to the surface within a round after the mongoose enters. Sacha returns to the surface 20 minutes later, after it has eaten. The mongoose does not drag a cobra's remains from the lair.

- To flush the cobras from their lair, the PCs can either turn the mongoose loose (as described above), pour water down a hole, or stuff burning torches or other flammable material down a hole to smoke them out.

- Defanging a dead cobra requires scissors or another sharp instrument. Defanging a live cobra is difficult, requiring a Strength check; if the check fails, the snake squirms free and makes a normal attack roll against the PC. If the PCs return a live snake to Taya (from the "Bania's Offer" encounter), he can clip the fangs with no danger.

Acolyte Reaction

Three rounds after the PC attempt to catch a cobra or damage the tree (whichever comes first), all of the conscious acolytes in the Acolyte circle begin to emit

erie sounds, a combination of hissing and whistling similar to the sounds the PCs heard if they climbed the mangrove tree.

The sounds grow louder and more grating. After five rounds of chanting, the sounds are so disturbing that the PCs must make their attack rolls at a -1 penalty unless they cover their ears or otherwise protect themselves. The sounds and the penalties continue until the PCs destroy the tree spirit (see below) or abandon their quest for the cobras and leave the area.

Tree Spirit

Five rounds after the PCs attempt to catch a snake, or as soon as the PCs attempt to damage the tree (whichever occurs first), the ground begins to vibrate and the tree branches sway as if being blown by a strong wind. All surviving white cobras immediately slither into the holes near the base of the tree to the safety of their lair. As the crowd in the Observation Area gasps in astonishment, an aura of blue light envelops the tree.

A moment later, a monstrous creature, resembling a ghostly white cobra with a human skull for a head, slithers from the trunk. The creature is 50 feet long; its tail is fused to the trunk of the tree. It snaps and hisses at the PCs.

Tree spirit: AC 0; HD 10*; hp 75; AT 1; Dmg 1-10 (bite); MV 180' (60'); Save M-U 10; AL C; THAC0 11; SD immune to *sleep*, *charm*, *hold*, *death magic*, and cold-based spells; cannot be turned by clerics; can only be hit by +1 or better weapons; health is tied to that of its tree (see text for details).

The tree spirit attacks viciously, attempting to kill as many PCs as possible. Its long body enables it to reach anywhere within the Snake Circle; however, it is unable to leave this area. If all of the PCs leave the Snake Circle, the tree spirit immediately withdraws into the tree; it instantly reappears as soon as any PC sets foot in the Snake Circle.

No one from the Observation Area will assist either the PCs or the tree spirit; they're too frightened. However, the crowd cheers wildly whenever the tree spirit makes a successful attack against a PC.

The tree spirit's health is tied to that of the mangrove tree. The tree has all of the vulnerabilities of normal wood; for instance, it can be set on fire or chopped with edged weapons. Assume the tree has an AC of 5 and 50 hit points.

If the tree is destroyed (reduced to 0 hp) or enveloped in flames (which takes 10 rounds after it is set afire), the tree spirit begins to lose hit points at the rate of 2-12 (2d6) per round; this loss is automatic, regardless of whether the PCs are in the Snake Circle.

Aftermath

If the tree spirit is destroyed, it dissipates in a flash of blue light, and the tree crumbles into a mound of black ash. The conscious acolytes rise to their feet,

dazed and confused as if waking from a dream; they have no memories of their experiences as acolytes.

The disillusioned crowd in the Observation Area rapidly disperses; they avoid contact with the PCs, whom they now regard as strange emissaries of the supernatural who are better left alone.

If the PCs haven't yet caught a snake, they can now attempt to do so, following the guidelines in the Cobra Catch section above; neither the crowd nor the former acolytes will interfere.

SWEAT OF THE BEGGAR KING

The Beggar King is a legendary figure who controls and exploits Dharsatra's multitudinous beggars. Though rumors abound concerning his identity and base of operations, only a few know the truth.

Questioning shopkeepers, farmers, priests, and members of all castes at laborer level or higher is futile; most dismiss the PCs' inquiries as nonsense. Some sneer, "If you seek the king of the beggars, perhaps you should speak with the beggars themselves."

In fact, chatting with Dharsatra's beggars is the best way to learn the whereabouts of the Beggar King. Beggars of all ages are easy to find—there are thousands of these homeless wretches sleeping in alleys and seeking handouts in the streets (use typical citizen statistics). The better-off citizens routinely ignore beggars, but begrudgingly accept them as an unavoidable fact of life in Dharsatra.

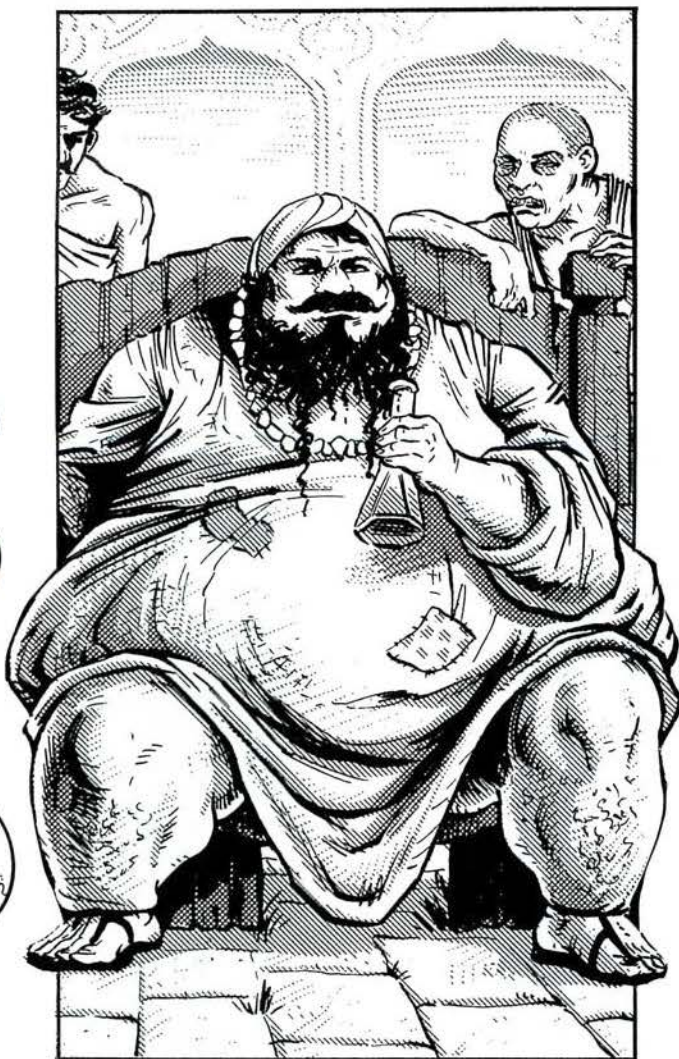
When the PCs approach a beggar, he looks pleadingly at them and extends his hand. The beggar does not speak to them unless they give him an offering, such as a scrap of bread, a cowrie, or a piaster. If the PCs make an offering and ask about the Beggar King, roll 1d20 and consult the Beggar Response Table (see p. 42) for the beggar's answer, or select a specific response of your own choice. If they give the beggar an especially generous offering (at least 1 Kh, or its equivalent in goods), add 5 to the die-roll. If you choose a response instead of rolling randomly, the beggar never remains silent.

The PCs may interview as many beggars as they wish. Alternately, the PCs may learn information about the Beggar King as a result of the encounters in the Optional Encounters section.

When the PCs learn the Beggar King's location, proceed to "Audience with the King," below.

The Token From the Azca

In HWA1, *Nightwail*, the PCs may have received a small token from an Azcan beggar nicknamed "Noseless" (p. 31). This scratched metal disk is a token of protection among some Beggars' Guilds. Here in Dharsatra, it helps the PCs find the Beggar King. If they show the token to a beggar, he automatically leads them to the King's palace (below). If you like, the token can also influence the King's mood for the better.



Optional Encounters

The PCs may experience either or both of the following encounters as they search for the Beggar King. The encounters are most likely to occur in a slum area of the Artisans' Quarter. The encounters may occur in any order.

A Round of Hututu

On a busy street—in Dharsatra, almost all streets are busy—a large crowd of ragged teenage boys gathers in a circle. Inside the circle are five more ragged teenagers, engaged in some sort of game. The crowd ignores the PCs, including their questions, as they're focused on the game, cheering their favorite contestants.

Use above-average citizen statistics for the teenagers. All of the teenagers are beggars, but they're exceptionally skilled ones, most supplementing their income with pickpocketing and thievery. (Many of them work for the Beggar King.)

The rules: Characters who observe the game quickly catch on to the rules. The game, called *hututu*, is similar to tag. Each contestant holds a piece

of charcoal. The object of the game is to eliminate all of the other contestants by lunging at them, marking their foreheads with the charcoal, and shouting "hututu!" A marked contestant must leave the game. The last remaining contestant is the winner.

The PCs notice that the tallest contestant (a boy named Drysu) is easily the most agile of the five. In short order, he eliminates the last of his four opponents, then raises his hands in triumph as the crowd screams their approval.

At the end of the game, Drysu announces there's time for one more game. Two shorter boys quickly join him. "Anyone else?" shouts Drysu. There are no more volunteers from the crowd.

If none of the PCs volunteer, the game ends, and the crowd breaks up; this encounter is over. If two of the PCs volunteer, the crowd applauds enthusiastically. Two PCs must participate for the game to proceed; if only one PC volunteers, the game breaks up and the contest is over.

Faceoff: The two PC contestants join the other three contestants in the playing circle, an area about 30' in diameter. Drysu gives each PC contestant a piece of charcoal. When all of the contestants are ready, Drysu shouts "hututu!" and the game begins.

Each round, each contestant can try to mark a contestant of his choice. The NPCs always attempt to mark a PC. To mark an opponent, the contestant must succeed in a Dexterity check. Drysu's Dexterity is 14, and each of the shorter boys has a Dexterity of 10. If the attempt is successful, the contestant who made the attempt shouts "hututu!" and the defeated opponent leaves the circle; if the contestant fails to shout, the tag doesn't count, and the opponent remains in the circle.

The PC contestants are free to attack each other, although this is bad strategy if other opponents are available. If all the contestants except the two PCs are eliminated, the PCs may continue the contest to determine a winner, but this has no effect on the outcome of this encounter.

Results: Regardless of the outcome, the crowd acknowledges the winner with enthusiastic cheers. If both PC contestants are defeated, the winner thanks them for participating, then melts into the crowd. None of the teenagers answer the PCs' questions about the Beggar King, and the encounter is over.

If a PC contestant wins the contest, Drysu congratulates him on his prowess. If the PC asks Drysu about the Beggar King, Drysu says he knows him well. "I work for him. In fact, he might have work for you too, if you're interested. He's always looking for people with quick hands." Drysu tells the PC where the Beggar King lives. But if the PCs tell the Beggar King that Drysu sent them, the King isn't particularly impressed; as far as the King is concerned, Drysu is just another underling.

If the PCs knew the location of the Beggar King prior to experiencing this encounter, then Drysu shares some other helpful information about the King. Choose response 16, 17, 18, or 19 from the Beggar Response Table.

Toothbrush Seller

As the PCs question Dharsatra's beggar population for information about the Beggar King, they encounter an old man (use typical citizen statistics) with greasy hair and a toothless grin. He clutches a dirty clay pot to his bony chest, and he claims to know all about the King.

If the PCs offer the old man money for his information, he shakes his head. "I don't need your money," he wheezes. "I've got a way to make all the money I need." He reaches into his pot and produces a foot-long twig, caked with filth and crawling with insect larva. "It's a toothbrush!" he says. "And there's plenty more where these came from. I just need somebody who has teeth to show my customers how it works."

Before the PCs can respond, the old man begins to cry, "Gather round! Toothbrushes here! Best you'll ever find!" In a matter of moments, a curious crowd of all castes has gathered around.

The old man brushes the larvae off the twig and thrusts it towards the most squeamish PC. "Brush!" he says. "Brush so the people can see how good it works. Do it, and I'll tell you what you want to know!" If none of the PCs volunteers to brush his or her teeth with the twig, the old man curses at them under his breath, then asks for volunteers from the crowd (there aren't any). The old man won't tell the PCs anything about the Beggar King; the encounter is over.

A PC who volunteers must brush his or her teeth with the filthy twig for two consecutive rounds to satisfy the old man. The twig tastes like a nauseating combination of dirt, rotten fish, and oil. After "brushing" with the twig for one round, the PC must save vs. Poison. Failure means the character feels sick and is unable to continue. If the saving throw is successful, the PC feels nauseated, but can choose to stop or continue.

If the PC continues brushing for one more round, the old man slaps him on the back, takes the twig, then crows to the crowd about his remarkable device "for sale at a price of only one piaster." There are no buyers, and the crowd quickly breaks up.

Though discouraged by the lack of sales, the old man is true to his word and tells the PCs where the Beggar King lives; if they follow these directions, proceed to Audience with the King, below. If the PCs knew the location of the Beggar King prior to this encounter, then the old man shares some other helpful information about the King (response 16, 17, 18 or 19 from the Beggar Response Table).

Before they leave, the old man offers each PC, by way of thanks for his or her cooperation, a free toothbrush. It works no better than an ordinary twig.

Audience with the King

In the midst of the worst slum in the Artisans' Quarter stands an ancient temple, its crumbling stone walls laced with cracks, its wooden doors and window sills reduced to rotting timber. Two filthy teenage beggars (use typical citizen statistics) slump against the wall near the entrance, staring impassively.

The temple was abandoned about a century ago when city officials declared the occupying sect illegal. Avoided by Immortal-fearing citizens ever since, it is now the home of the Beggar King and about 200 outcasts, whom he ruthlessly rules and exploits. In exchange for a place to live, the beggars tithe him a portion of their meager earnings and serve as his attendants and guards.

The King's Temple

If the PCs approach the entryway, one of the beggars rises to his feet and scampers inside to alert the Beggar King. The remaining beggar refuses to speak with the characters, but they can almost feel his craziness.

When the characters enter the hall, read this:

Entering the building, you pass between two granite pillars, each nearly 25' high, riddled with chips and cracks. Beyond the pillar stretches the main hall, 150' long and 100' wide. An overpowering stench comes from piles of decaying garbage heaped against the walls. Refuse also litters the tile floor, its once glossy surface now marred with scuffs and scratches. Sloppily rendered frescoes with flaking paint cover the walls and ceiling. The frescoes show an immense fat man in various poses towering over tiny beggars dressed in rags.

Two crude wooden thrones painted orange and purple stand against the far wall. Behind the thrones are a pair of large doors.

An immensely overweight man sits in the right throne, his huge belly hanging nearly to his knees. He wears a billowing robe of coarse burlap and drinks yellowish liquid from a chipped glass vase. About a dozen wiry beggars surround his throne.

The doors behind the throne lead to a series of *chaityas* (halls of worship) that now serve as dormitories for the King's army of beggars.

The man is Vascha Vijanagul, more commonly known as the Beggar King. He's drinking *panch*, a sickly-sweet mixture of alcohol, sugar, lemon, and spices.

Vascha Vijanagul, the Beggar King: 4th level fighter; AC 8; hp 28; Dmg 1d6 (club embedded with nails); MV 60' (20') (movement reduced due to excessive bulk); Save F4; AL N; THAC0 17.

Attendants: Use above-average citizen statistics for the beggar attendants.

On the left throne sits a thin, dirty woman with short brown hair. She wears a *sari*, a long piece of cloth wrapped around the body like a dress. Most Shahjapuri women wear a sari made of silk, but this one is made of brown burlap. Tarnished brass bracelets jangle on her arms and legs.

A half-dozen beggars surround her. One of them stands behind her, rigorously massaging her scalp. The woman moans loudly as the beggar massages her; it's difficult to tell if she's moaning from pain or pleasure.

The woman is Astad, the hypochondriac concubine of the Beggar King; use above-average citizen statistics for Astad and her attendants. Though Astad is perfectly healthy, her endless list of imaginary illnesses annoy the King to no end. The massage is a special scalp stimulation technique known as *champo*. It's quite relaxing, but has no particular healing effects.

Reception and Inquiry

"Step forward!" barks the King when he sees the PCs. If the PCs hesitate, the King says, "If you wish an audience, then do as I say!"

If the PCs approach the King, he studies them closely. If they speak, he interrupts. "Quiet! Let me have a look at you." The King snaps his fingers, and one of his attendants produces a large fragment from a broken mirror. The King smiles as he admires his reflection, stroking his many chins and brushing flakes of filth from his hair. "A more handsome man you've never seen, am I right?" he asks. But he bursts into loud guffaws before they can answer.

Regaining his composure, the King dismisses the attendant with the mirror, then asks the PCs for their names and homelands. The King accepts whatever they have to say.

"Are any of you doctors?" whines Astad. "I'm not feeling well today."

"Shut up!" snaps the King to his concubine. "There's nothing wrong with you. You're just sick in the head." Then, turning to the PCs, he asks, "What's your business? Looking for work? I'm not hiring right now, no, no."

The PCs don't look like beggars to the King; he's not interested in working with people that might be hard to control. The King refuses to answer questions about the temple or the beggars ("not your concern"). Astad has no information for the PCs; she responds to all questions with a moan of pain—"I'm too ill to think straight."

If the PCs tell the King the real reason why they've come—that they need his sweat—his jaw drops and his eyes widen. He convulses with laughter, his belly shaking so hard that it threatens to drag him off his throne. "My sweat!" he roars. "I have been asked for many things in my life, but never have I been asked for perspiration!" When the King recovers, he says flatly, "No. Now get out of my temple. Now."

Convincing the King

Some standard tactics the player characters might try:

Attack the King: He snaps his fingers twice and dozens of beggars pour through the double doors behind his throne; enough beggars appear to convince the PCs that attacking is futile. It's not that the beggars are great fighters; rather, endless slaughter of these starvelings should sicken the PCs. Play up the battle for maximum pathos, until the PCs decide to use less murderous methods.

Threaten to expose the King's operation to the local officials: The King laughs. "Go right ahead!" The King makes regular pay-offs to the officials. If

the PCs approach the officials with information about the King, the officials promise to look into it later, but won't ever do anything.

Convince the King to help them: The PCs must accomplish two of the three following goals. Neither the King nor Astad gives the PCs any direct hints about these goals. If they ask the King what it would take to get his cooperation, he sniffs, "Nothing you have to offer, I'm sure of that." The PCs must rely on their own observations of the King and Astad, or on information acquired from the Beggar Response Table or the Optional Encounters. The goals:

- The PCs can bribe the King with at least 2 Rp (10 gp) or its equivalent in goods or equipment. Role-play this, as the vain King asks for suitable shows of obeisance with the gift.

- The PCs can attend to Astad's "illness." No actual medical treatment is required; in fact, she will reject offers of actual first-aid, as well as *potions of healing* and other forms of magical healing (which won't affect her anyway, since she's not really sick). For the purpose of convincing the King to cooperate, Astad responds only to pampering; acceptable "treatments" include attempts at *champo*, soothing back or foot massages, and elaborate but phony healing rituals—the more imaginative, the better.

If the PCs perform a satisfying treatment (that is, their efforts impress you), Astad tells the King that she feels much better. "These are excellent healers, bipsy. Reward them for making me feel better." The henpecked King will be inclined to comply with the PCs' request.

- The PCs can appeal to the King's ego. The King believes he is unusually intelligent and crafty. He is also particularly proud of his massive bulk, which has taken him years to acquire. If the PCs flatter the King well, he complies with their request. Note, however, that the King is used to routine groveling from his army of beggars, such as "How handsome and strong you are" and "I have never met such a wise man as you." Only exceptionally creative flattery impresses the King, such as "Your stomach is a work of art, as much as the sun is a work of art made by the Immortals."

Results

The King tolerates the PCs' presence for no more than a few minutes. If they haven't convinced him to help by then, he orders them to leave, calling on as many beggars as necessary to enforce his command. The PCs may return for a second audience with the King after a sleep or two.

If the PCs achieve two of the goals above, the King agrees to cooperate. It's easy to get the King to perspire—because of his excessive weight, he works up a good sweat by merely walking a few yards at a quick pace. However, it's up to the PCs to decide how to collect his perspiration. They can wipe his brow with a rag or handkerchief, but the sweat dries out within a few hours. Collecting his perspiration in a bottle or flask is difficult but possible, though the PCs may risk evaporation of the fluid or breakage of the container.

The best solution is for the King to go with the PCs to the Temple of Eight Sweet Winds and sweat directly onto the floor. If they asks the King to accompany them, he agrees. En route to the temple, the King is cooperative but obnoxious: He insists that they take innumerable breaks so he can rest; he stops to admire his reflection in windows and puddles; and he consumes so much *panch* (which he brings along in several large flasks) that he becomes staggeringly drunk.

DIAGRAM OF THE YOGIN =

North of the city, beyond the untouchable slums, lies a large colony of citizens afflicted with *Vhashta's disease*. The disfigured and crippled victims of this wasting disease are permanently banished to this colony as required by Dharsatra law.

Though it is commonly accepted that *Vhashta's disease* is deadly, it is, in fact, rarely fatal in itself. Likewise, most believe *Vhashta's disease* is highly contagious. However, it is quite rare that exposure results in the affliction of an otherwise healthy person. Still, the misconceptions linger. The yogin Amravati is among the few Dharsatran citizens with the courage to help ease the victims' misery.

The PCs have little trouble learning about Amravati, since every priest in the city knows who he is and where he lives. "He considers himself a miracle worker," a priest says, his voice dripping in sarcasm. He gives the PCs directions to a specific location about 10 miles beyond the outskirts of the Artisans' Quarter; proceed to "Temple in the Hill," below.

Before the PCs leave, the priest warns them that entering the colony is risky. "The disease drives its victims crazy and makes them very violent. And if one of them so much as breathes on you, you become infected too!" (None of this is true.)

Though most members of the lower castes haven't heard of Amravati, virtually all of them can tell how to get to the *Vhashta* colony. The PCs may learn more about Amravati and the disease victims as a result of the encounters in the section below.

Optional Encounters

Both of the following optional encounters occur on the dirt path that winds through the desolate countryside and leads to the *Vhashta* colony. If the PCs are to experience both encounters, run the Two Sisters encounter first.

Two Sisters

After the PCs have traveled a few miles on the road leading to the *Vhashta* colony, they see a frail woman (use typical citizen statistics) coming in their direction, struggling to pull a cart which contains a man-sized object completely wrapped in white cloth. The woman looks about 60 years old; she can barely budge the heavy cart.

This is Lydra, a rug weaver from Dharsatra. If the PCs ask why she's pulling the cart, she says that her

horse broke loose and ran away. She's telling the truth, but the PCs cannot locate the horse.

Lydra has just come from the *Vhashta* colony where her sister, Orishi, was a resident. "She died this morning. I promised to give her a proper funeral." The cart holds her sister's body. Suspicious of the strangers, Lydra declines to answer any other questions. "I have far to go," she says. If the PCs tag along behind, they may follow her and observe the funeral ritual (see below), but Lydra won't supply any additional information. If the PCs abandon Lydra, the encounter is over.

If the PCs offer to help Lydra with the wagon, she gratefully accepts. She tells them she's taking her sister's body to a valley of violets about three miles away. "Orishi and I spent many pleasant sleeps there as children. This is where I will perform her final rites."

Any PC who makes a successful Strength check can pull the cart. Any two PCs working together can pull the cart automatically. If they pull the cart, they earn Lydra's trust. She answers questions as follows. All of her information is accurate; she learned it in a lifetime of caring for her sister.

What do you know about *Vhashta's disease*? "It is a vicious disease that attacks the body by twisting it into grotesque shapes. Many victims become blind or crippled. Others lose all feeling in their skin."

Is the disease fatal? "No. The lives of its victims are shortened by the brutish conditions under which they are forced to live."

Is the disease contagious? "It is nearly impossible for a healthy person to contract the disease from an infected person. No one knows how the disease actually spreads." (Actually, the disease is hereditary.)

What happened to your sister? Can we see her? "She died of an untreated infection." Reluctantly, Lydra pulls back the covering and shows her sister's horrible body. The emaciated corpse is covered with thick lumps. Its right arm is bent and twisted like the gnarled branch of a tree.

How did the disease get its name? "From a Dharsatran administrator who was the first recorded victim of the disease over two hundred cycles ago."

What do you know about the colony? "It is a wretched place, unfit even for vermin. Diseased victims are forced to live there by law."

What do you know about Amravati? "A wonderful, selfless man who has devoted his life to caring for *Vhashta* victims. Ask any of the colonists. They can tell you where to find him."

Lydra eventually leads the PCs to a shallow valley filled with violets and surrounded by small cherry trees. Lydra asks the PCs to bring her sister's body to the center of the valley. Lydra gathers armfuls of twigs and brush, laying them gently on the body until it is completely covered. She then sets the twigs on fire. As gentle flames envelop the body, Lydra says that the fire will purge all traces of evil from her sister's spirit. "An afterlife of peace will then be hers." Lydra bows her head in silent prayer as the fire burns.

The PCs are free to wait with Lydra or to leave; the

fire burns for about two hours. At the end of the ceremony, Lydra thanks the PCs, then says she must return to her home in Dharsatra. She refuses donations—"give them to Amravati instead." She will not accompany the PCs to the Vhashta colony.

Deadly Spy

When the PCs are within a mile of the Vhashta colony, they notice a figure lurking in a clump of bushes near the dirt path. The figure, who is about 50 feet away, appears to be a young man dressed in filthy rags. If no one takes action, the figure withdraws into a nearby woods and disappears, and the encounter is over.

If anyone shouts at the figure or approaches him, the figure bolts into the woods. The figure is a Kirtanta assassin, sent to spy on the PCs by his fellow assassins, who are hiding out in the Vhashta colony.

Kirtanta assassin: 7th level thief; AC 5; hp 22; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 + 1 + special; MV 120' (40'); Save T7; ML 11; AL C; THAC0 17. Carries dagger and silver pickaxe, which works as *long sword* +1 and, once per day, as a *staff of withering*.

If the assassin eludes the PCs for three rounds, assume the assassin has disappeared into the woods; the PCs cannot locate him, and the encounter is over. Otherwise, if the PCs catch up him, the assassin attacks, using the weapon concealed inside his clothes. If the assassin appears to be on the verge of losing the fight—for instance, if he loses half or more of his hit points, or is hopelessly outnumbered—he shouts a strange imprecation: "The avatar of Dakka will destroy your unclean souls in the Nightstorm!"

Then the spy speaks a short incantation, and on the back of his hand, a tattoo glows red. It's a picture of a spider, but as the PCs watch, it turns into a real spider and bites the assassin's hand! He screams, in surprise as well as pain, and the spider vanishes.

The assassin was told the spell would carry him to safety. Instead, the spider has injected him with a special poison known only to the Kirtanta. Instantly, the assassin's body begins to shake, and dark smoke curls out of his ears. The assassin's body glows red for two rounds, then explodes in a flash of fire, leaving only his charred skeleton behind! Any character within five feet of the body when it explodes must save vs. Spell or suffer 1d6 points of damage.

Temple in the Hill

The dirt path ends at a rock wall, hundreds of yards long and nearly twenty feet high. The wall is covered with ornate carvings of a multi-armed female with ebony skin, tusk-like teeth, and a fierce expression. These carvings represent the dark legendary figure of Dakka. (Establish these carvings now, and let the PCs ask bystanders about them. The characters face an avatar of Dakka in Chapter 9.)

A rickety wooden gate marks the only passage through the wall. There are no guards; the PCs are free to enter the unlocked gate.

Beyond the wall sprawls a vast slum of mind-boggling decay, isolated from the rest of the world by

cliffs and hills of solid rock. The air reeks of disease and death.

The slum is a collection of hundreds of mud shacks, separated by damp streets laced with rivulets of raw sewage. Emaciated women, their bodies covered with lumpy nodules and thick scabs, pick aimlessly through piles of rotting garbage. Their slime-caked children with twisted arms and swollen bellies paw listlessly at circling flies. A legless man lies unmoving in a puddle of filth; a huge rat scampers from a shack and sniffs his greasy hair.

For the residents of the slum, use typical citizen statistics; modify their hit points, movement rates, and attack capabilities as necessary to reflect their weakened condition. They regard the PCs with either mild curiosity or outright indifference. However, the residents gratefully accept offers of food, water, or aid. All are infected with Vhashta's disease, which causes weakness and skin nodules at best, and blindness, crippled limbs, and grotesque disfigurements at worst. (The PCs run no risk of contracting the disease by interacting with the residents.)

Residents respond warmly and politely to conversation, asking strings of questions about the outside world. They're particularly interested in the PCs' experiences and news from Dharsatra. If the PCs ask about the multi-armed female on the wall, the residents say it represents an evil Immortal named Dakka, avatar of destruction. "The paintings mark this colony as a place of death."

The residents have no information about the assassin the PCs may have met in the Deadly Spy encounter. Any resident can direct the PCs to Amravati, who lives in a cave on the far side of the colony.

Rescue in the Rocks

As the PCs make their way through the slums, they notice hundreds of relatively healthy residents wielding crude pickaxes and shovels, working hard to excavate a rocky hillside. Closer examination reveals that the residents are attempting to excavate an immense temple, apparently buried by a landslide or volcanic eruption hundreds of years ago.

Sections of the temple are already exposed. Breath-takingly beautiful alabaster walls are inlaid with silver mirrors and marble panels. Tiny multi-colored stone statuettes of humans and animals line terraced ivory platforms.

If the PCs ask about the excavation, the workers tell them that they are attempting to uncover an ancient temple built centuries ago in honor of Tajalore, "the Maimed One." The residents of the colony discovered the temple by accident a few years ago. The workers anticipate that the excavation will require several more decades to complete, "but we are determined to see it through. If we restore the temple, perhaps Tajalore will take pity on us and end our misery."

While the PCs examine the ruins, they hear the sounds of a rock slide coming from beyond the nearest hill, followed by cries for help. Workers nearby drop their tools and rush in the direction of the sounds.

If the PCs ignore the sounds, the encounter is over; proceed to the Meeting with Amravati section. If the PCs investigate, they see dozens of workers hastily removing rocks from a large pile obscured by clouds of dust. A closer look shows a worker buried in rocks from the waist down, his face wrenched in agony.

If the PCs choose not to help the workers uncover the victim of the rock slide, the workers free their comrade in about 20 minutes, then carry his bleeding body to a nearby shack to rest and recover. The encounter is over; proceed to Meeting with Amravati.

If the PCs offer to help, the workers gratefully accept. With the PCs' assistance, the rock slide victim is freed in just a few minutes. The victim's body is covered with clusters of nodules, and his face is so disfigured that he is unable to speak. His legs have been buried by the rock slide, though the damage is not excessive.

When all but the last of the rocks are removed, several of the workers move to pull the victim free, but they are held back by the largest of their number, named Brahsu (use above-average citizen statistics). "Let the strangers do it," Brahsu says. He stares at the PCs with steely eyes. "With your bare hands, please. Surely you are not afraid." Brahsu is testing their mettle.

If the PCs decline to touch the victim, or if they insist on wearing gloves or other protection, Brahsu scoffs at them. "See?" he says to the other workers. "All strangers are the same. They see us as animals to be shunned, not men to be respected." The workers take the victim away to a nearby shack to recover. Brahsu spits at the characters, then turns away; neither he nor any of the other workers will speak further with them. The encounter is over.

If the PCs touch the victim with their bare hands and pull him free of the rocks, Brahsu smiles and extends his hand in friendship while the workers carefully carry the victim away to a shack to rest. "You are as compassionate as you are courageous," says Brahsu. "Your presence honors us." Brahsu then excuses himself, saying that he and his companions need to continue with their work. "Perhaps we will meet again." (For the purposes of The Assassins Strike section below, note that the PCs have made friends with Brahsu.)

Meeting with Amravati

Following the residents' directions, the PCs locate a five-foot opening in a cliff on the far side of the colony compound. The opening leads to a 30-foot diameter cave. The scent of cinnamon drifts from the cave, easily the most pleasant aroma that the PCs have encountered since they entered the colony.

Several *charpoy*s (mats made of string) cover the floor of the cave. The walls are lined with simple wooden shelves filled with clay pots and dishes. The pottery contains a variety of colorful herbs and powders.

Against the far wall of the cave, a withered old man wearing nothing but a white *dhoti* bends over a moaning boy resting on a charpoy. The old man

soaks a cloth in a bowl, then gently sponges the boy's body. (The old man is the yogin Amravati.)

Amravati: 3rd level cleric; AC 9; hp 10; #AT 1; Dmg 1-4 (stone dagger); MV 60' (20') (movement rate reduced due to old age); Save C3; AL L; THAC0 19. Spells: *detect evil*, *cure light wounds*.

If the PCs speak or otherwise draw attention to themselves, Amravati turns and puts his finger to his lips. "Just a moment, please." He then resumes treating the boy. After another gentle application of the cloth, Amravati rises to his feet and approaches the PCs.

"He's resting now," says Amravati, motioning for the PCs to sit with him on a charpoy on the floor. Amravati appears to be at least 80 years old. He walks with effort and is nearly toothless, but his eyes are bright, and he has no symptoms of Vhashta's disease. He introduces himself as a caretaker of the colony. "I welcome you to my home. I seldom encounter visitors from the outer world." By this he doesn't mean outside the Hollow World, but simply outside the colony; but this may startle the PCs!

If asked about the colony or the diseased residents, Amravati tells them anything they wish to know; for details about the disease, refer to Lydra's comments in the Two Sisters encounter above. Amravati isn't afraid of getting sick—"I have been treating Vhashta victims for half a century. The passage of years has taken its toll, but I am otherwise in fine health."

If the PCs ask about the boy Amravati is treating, he explains that the boy accidentally burned himself. "It happens often to Vhashta victims. Many have no feeling in their skin. If they become distracted when close to a fire, they may burn, since they cannot feel the flames." Amravati treated the boy with a soothing liquid made of cinnamon and other herbs, an effective first-aid treatment for Vhashta victims.

If the PCs ask Amravati why he lives in the colony, he says modestly, "There is no higher calling than to serve others. I am a drop of water struggling against a raging fire." Amravati labors incessantly to comfort and heal the residents of the colony.

Amravati asks the PCs their names and their homelands, accepting any information about themselves they're willing to share. He asks them to explain their mission in detail. When Amravati understands their need for the yantra pattern, he rubs his jaw and shakes his head. "You are well-intentioned strangers, but you are strangers nevertheless. I am not certain it is wise to share this secret with newcomers."

The PCs can convince Amravati to reveal the yantra pattern if they offer to improve the lives of the colony residents. Acceptable offers include a substantial sum of money (250+ gp), tools or equipment, medical supplies, or technical innovations for the colony, such as designs for irrigation ditches or simple sewer systems. If the PCs provide evidence that Kirtanta assassins are after them, Amravati immediately agrees to help them. Amravati despises the Kirtanta.

The Assassins Strike

Negotiations with Amravati stop with the sudden appearance of six ragged figures in the mouth of the cave (if the PCs defeated the assassin the *Deadly Spy encounter* above, there are only five.) The figures, Kirtanta assassins, quickly scan the cave, then charge inside.

Kirtanta assassins (5): 4th level thieves; AC 5; hp 12; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4 + 1; MV 120' (40'); Save T4; ML 11 (9 without leader); AL C; THAC0 19. Each carries *dagger +1* that only works for that individual Kirtanta.

Kirtanta assassin leader: 7th level thief; AC 5; hp 22; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 + 1 + special; MV 120' (40'); Save T7; ML 11; AL C; THAC0 17. Carries *dagger* and *silver pickaxe*, which works (for leader only) as *long sword +1* and, once per day, as a *staff of withering*.

The assassins have dressed in rags so that they can mingle unobtrusively with the residents of the colony. They have tracked the PCs to the cave and now intend to kill both Amravati and the PCs.

The Kirtanta leader moves directly to Amravati while the followers converge on the weakest-looking character. If the PCs cannot stop the leader, he strikes and withers Amravati on his second try. The assassins fight until half are killed; the survivors bolt from the cave and attempt to escape. If the escaping assassins elude the PCs for three rounds, the PCs lose sight of them.

If the PCs made friends with Brahsu in the *Rescue in the Rocks* section above, then five rounds after the assassins appear (or later, at your option), Brahsu and about two dozen of his companions appear in the cave entrance, brandishing shovels and pickaxes. Clearly outnumbered, all surviving assassins immediately bolt from the cave, pushing their way past Brahsu and his men. Brahsu and his men can't stop the assassins, nor do they make effective attacks against them. The PCs may pursue; the assassins escape if they elude the PCs for three rounds.

If the PCs capture an assassin and attempt to question him, the assassin makes only cryptic statements about "the Nightstorm" and "the wrath of Dakka." "You will pay for your insolence at the Temple of Eight Sweet Winds!"

At an early opportunity, the assassin speaks the incantation that activates the spider tattoo on his hand. (He refuses to believe that this will kill him.) The poison kills him in the dramatic manner described above under *Deadly Spy*. Remember that any character within five feet of the body when it explodes must save vs. Spell or suffer 1d6 damage.

The Diagram Revealed

If Amravati hadn't agreed to help the PCs prior to the appearance of the assassins, he readily agrees to help if the PCs defeat the assassins or save his life. If Amravati dies during the attack, one of the residents steps forward and reveals himself as Amravati's disciple; he also knows the yantra diagram.

Amravati (or his disciple) demonstrates the diagram by tracing it in the dirt with a stick. After the PCs have memorized the diagram—an intricate pattern of circles and arcs—Amravati wipes it away, wishing the PCs good luck on the rest of their mission.



Beggar Response Table

D20 Roll	Response
1-5	The beggar says nothing.
6-9	Claims that he's never heard of the Beggar King.
10-11	Runs away, tries to vanish into the crowd. If PCs pursue immediately, they catch him; beggar gives one of the responses below. (Roll 1d20 and add 11 to the result, or choose a response.)
12	"The Beggar King is an Immortal, the son of Ilsundal. He lives in the clouds." (False.)
13	"The Beggar King is dead. Eaten by a tiger." (False.)
14	"He lives in a tree house in the jungle, about 50 miles west of the city." (False.)
15	"The Beggar King lives in an abandoned temple in a slum somewhere in the Artisans' Quarter." (True.) Doesn't know exact location.
16	Says the King is protected by city officials. "He pays off the <i>panchat</i> (local council). They make sure he stays safe." (True.)
17	As 16; also knows the King lives with a concubine named Astad. "He is smitten with her. He does whatever she says." (True.)
18	As 17, but adds, "Astad always believes she's sick, when in fact she is very healthy. The Beggar King spends much money looking for healers. But it is very difficult to heal someone who is not ill." (True.)
19	Has heard that the King is greedy and vain. "His love of money is matched only by his love of himself." (True.)
20 +	Knows where the Beggar King lives, and gives the PCs directions to a location in the Artisans' Quarter. Proceed to the "Audience with the King" section.

Before proceeding, make sure the PCs have completed all three mini-scenarios from the last chapter. If they failed to reach any of the goals there, you can run them through the same or similar scenarios again. For instance, the PCs hear rumors of another nest of white cobras, or another pandit with the required mantra.

If you prefer not to repeat the scenarios, then Chatterjee can procure the needed materials through his family connections or his greater knowledge of the city. However, use this method as a last resort, since if you do players may feel their efforts have been pointless. Reduce their XP awards at the module's conclusion if they haven't done it themselves.

HOW THEY GET HERE

The Kirtanta may stage additional attempts on the PCs' lives as they return to the Temple of Eight Sweet Winds (or wherever they decided to rendezvous with Chatterjee). These are left to DM's discretion.

The Temple is as before. Chatterjee is ready to instruct the PCs in the proper construction of the Yantra of the Emerald River; the instruction takes about five minutes. If something has happened to Chatterjee during the adventure, the old guru can visit the PCs in a dream-vision, expedited by Astorius, to convey the necessary information.

After Chatterjee has explained how to make the yantra, he adds, "As to the place you must be drawing it, I have been receiving another dream. It must be done within the dome." He casts his eyes skyward.

This may intimidate the PCs, for they may have heard that no one in living memory has entered the dome. This is the common legend in Shahjapur; in fact, Chatterjee says, the dream has revealed to him that many have secretly entered the dome: the Kirtanta assassins!

Rope Trick

How did the assassins enter the floating dome? "They used a device of some kind," says Chatterjee. "My dream is revealing that it is having something to do with the statue of Dakka."

In a crowded alcove of the Temple stands a large, threatening statue made of finely polished cherrywood. The statue, artfully carved, depicts the eight-armed Dakka, who embodies the Shahjapuri principle of destruction. This is the statue Chatterjee saw in his dream. Over forty Dharsatrans of all castes are paying homage to the statue, laying offerings of candles and grain at its base.

In contrast to the Known World, the Shahjapuri regard destruction as a positive idea: that all material things must, in the fullness of time, decay in order to free their portions of the life spirit to take new forms. It is only premature destruction, such as that fostered by Entropy Immortals, that proper

Shahjapuri despise. So Dakka is a much revered figure in local mythology.

The statue is not magical. However, a concealed compartment in its base holds a thin 100' jute rope of curious weave. Any extended investigation uncovers the compartment and the rope; optionally, detection requires an Intelligence check or a thief's find traps ability.

Keeping the rope: The main problem is not finding this rope, but keeping it. Any examination of the statue may provoke the citizens' wrath, unless the PCs deflect that anger with plausible lies, threats, or stirring appeals to virtue. But once the PCs pacify or drive off the crowd, they must face the Kirtanta.

The assassins close in quietly as soon as the PCs find the compartment. The Kirtanta are happy to let the crowd harass the PCs as long as feasible, and may even try to rouse the citizens' anger with shouted taunts against the PCs. Failing that, the assassins move in for the kill.

To start with, the Kirtanta send in one 4th level assassin per PC. In the lead is a bearded fanatic, Dahrabi, their 7th level leader who wields the ominous silver pickaxe. After combat begins, one more assassin joins the battle on every second round. The Kirtanta flee if two-thirds of their forces fall. If the PCs demonstrate magic unknown in the Hollow World, the assassins flee if only one-third of them are defeated. However, Dahrabi always fights to the death.

Aftermath: The lesser Kirtanta, like the ones in Chapter 6, try to activate their spider tattoos (thereby explosively poisoning themselves, all unknowing). If the PCs restrain them, these Kirtanta know little except that they must protect "the avatar of Dakka" who "crouches like a spider, guarding the Emerald River." They don't know what this means.

Dahrabi, if he survives, speaks of the reshaping of the pantheon to make Entropy paramount, and "the spell that stretches moments without end." This is an obscure reference to the time-altering spell that Thanatos has cast on the Immortals' time marker. The PCs see this marker in the next chapter.

Dahrabi also taunts the PCs: "You are being smaller than mice beneath the heels of Dakka. You are cowering upon her outstretched palm. She can be grinding you beneath her fingertip." (The PCs discover what this means later in this chapter.) "Go and be facing her now," says Dahrabi, curiously smug. He even instructs the PCs in how to use the rope to enter the Temple's floating dome!

The Passage

The rope's magic becomes evident when the holder throws one end into the air. The rope end spirals upward and vanishes just below the ceiling. The rope hangs down from nothingness. Any character can climb it like a *rope of climbing*.

Public reaction: Recall that all this occurs while the Temple is crowded with acolytes and Kirtanta. They may all disapprove of the PCs' magical entry into the floating dome, if it is performed openly. (The Kirtanta climbed the rope while concealed behind scaffolding.) Do the assassins whip up the crowd's resentment of this "sacrilege"? Do frenzied samdus try to muscle their way past the PCs and climb the rope? Or does everyone flee this magic, thinking it will bring down the wrath of all 33,333 Immortals?

The difficulty of the passage is up to you. Should a crazed fakir or other bystander beat the PCs up the rope, he or she becomes an early victim of the menace inside the floating dome, already beyond rescue as the PCs arrive (see below).

If the crowd riots and tries to prevent the PCs from climbing, discourage the PCs from assaulting the crowd (but not from attacking any Kirtanta rabble rouser). The preferred technique is for the players to make inspired speeches that dissuade the crowd from attacking their characters. Decide the success of this approach according to how well the players orate and role-play.

Climbing the rope: Once the PCs reach the top of the rope, the ceiling seems to stretch further away and the rope to lengthen. As they climb higher, dense white mist envelops them. They feel dizzy for a moment, and it causes them to let go of the rope. They fall one inch to the floor of the floating dome of the Temple of Eight Sweet Winds. They have been *teleported* by long-standing Immortal magic.

Troubleshooting

If the PCs refuse to climb the rope, Asterius can send another dream vision. So can Thanatos, which may convince the PCs that proceeding with the mission is their only respite from his nightmares.

The PCs might also make their way into the floating dome under their own power, depending on the plausibility of their plan. However, the dome is protected with Immortal magic of your choosing, such as a permanent *prismatic wall* (from the Master Rules). Only extreme cleverness, power, or trickery lets the characters penetrate the dome.

Trickery? Yes, within the dome lives the avatar of Dakka, the transformed Irila Kaze. She can permit intruders to bypass the dome's defenses, so that she may toy with them inside (see below).

THE SCENE

You're on the marble floor of the floating dome above the Temple of Eight Sweet Winds. This is an onion-shaped hollow room about 30 feet across, dimly lit from some source you

can't locate. The floor curves upward to become the walls, which are all covered with bizarre, beautiful abstract designs.

It's dark overhead, but the chamber looks much taller than it is wide. You see a confusing, spider-web framework of thin rust-colored pillars. They support the dome, starting in a circle halfway up the wall. They converge from all angles on a central support, a round metal disk about ten feet across. It's about fifteen feet above you.

A thin, foul-smelling breeze blows from nowhere. You wet a finger, but you can't tell its direction. The place smells of garbage and old liquor. Suddenly you recognize that smell: it's the odor of the Darokinian liqueur, Treesblood.

INVESTIGATION

The floating dome exhibits strange gravity. One can walk high up on the curve of the floor, yet it still feels like normal gravity, pulling outward. The effect reaches halfway up the dome to the arc where the lowest pillars begin. Beyond that, normal gravity returns; the PCs must climb around on the pillars to proceed higher.

Pillars: These are iron poles six inches in diameter, rusty but still strong. They fill the upper half of the dome in a confusing pattern; despite the small size of the dome, characters climbing around up here can easily get disoriented. Built by Immortal magic, they are invulnerable to all mortal attacks.

Residents: Not even the most diligent search detects anyone in the dome. However, unknown to the PCs, the transformed Irila Kaze is observing them from the dark network of pillars overhead. She has shrunk to the size of a fly, making her impossible to spot. She appears at her own choosing, below.

Trash: Around the dome lie dozens of broken glass bottles. These were flasks of Treesblood, the liqueur that Irila Kaze dotes on. A strong residual odor lingers on them. Should the PCs look for an intact bottle, one or two of the empty flasks remain unbroken.

The metal disk overhead measures 10' in diameter and an inch thick. It holds piles of dirty fabric, peacock bones and fruit rinds, and other leavings. . . and an array of small figurines.

Terror in Miniature

The central disk is usually Irila Kaze's perch and lair. The floor here is covered with miniature figures of people and animals, each a few inches high. Shahjapuri peasants, horses, local monsters, noble administrators, and mansabdars crowd together, mostly in postures of terror.

Though immobile, these are living beings. The

Kirtanta kidnapped them, and Kaze has shrunk them with *powder of oak-in-acorn*, a rare magical powder she used previously in Chapter 4 of HWA1, when she shrank the Gланtrian caravan.

PCs who played HWA1 instantly notice and recognize that caravan: a train of ten small wooden wagons heaped with crates and chests, drawn by fine Gланtrian horses and surrounded by human guards and drivers. The whole caravan could fit on a large footstool. (If the party has not played HWA1, there is no caravan.)

If PC wizards try to dispel the magic that reduced the figures, they can restore only one figure at a time. Treat the enchantment as if cast by a 20th level magic-user. If the PCs succeed in restoring one figure to full size, they have no time to interrogate the restored victim; Kaze attacks as described below.

EVENTS

Creating the Yantra

When the players are ready to proceed, read:

With Chatterjee's guidance, you wash the floor, make paste from the cobra's fang, and draw the yantra of the Emerald River. All the while, the old guru chants the words you learned. As soon as you finish drawing the symbol, it starts to glow with a dim green light, the color of a new leaf.

Chatterjee speaks the mantra louder and faster, and he gestures for you to join in. As you do so, the yantra glows brighter. The breeze strengthens, bringing a tantalizing smell of salt. Chatterjee's forehead is shining with sweat now, and he is bending over in concentration. The energy is building; you can feel it.

And then a horsefly buzzes past your ear. Then there's another, and another. In a moment, you're surrounded by a cloud of horseflies, as though you'd stepped into a swamp. Their buzzing echoes strangely.

This is a *phantasmal force* spell. Irila Kaze, who has shrunk to horsefly-size herself, is creating this illusion from a hiding place overhead. When the PCs are distracted, she flies down among the illusory insects and sprinkles *powder of oak-in-acorn*, the shrinking powder, in a circle around the PCs. This takes one round per character in the PCs' group. (Kaze carries the powder in a series of copper tubes worn as a necklace.)

Give the PCs Intelligence checks to spot her or the trail of powder. If they don't spot her, they hear her incantation, but it's too late; they must make saving throws vs. Spell to avoid being shrunk! Shrunk characters become immobile and helpless, so try not to shrink all the PCs; for example, let a few escape the circle at the last minute.

If they avoid being shrunk, read this aloud:

The horseflies vanish. At that moment, a slender figure appears, as though from nowhere, and walks forward into the light. For an instant it looks like an old woman with white hair, wearing a simple black sari with gold trim. But from behind her back she unfolds six extra arms!

She's carrying two long swords, and two of her arms are poised to gesture like a spellcaster. Around her neck she wears a necklace made of many small copper tubes.

For a moment the monstrous woman weaves drunkenly, but she quickly recovers herself. "Hist! Mayhap a storm will blow away your lovely pattern," says Irila Kaze.

Talking With Kaze

Like her Blood Brethren companions (in HWA1 and HWA2), Irila Kaze is completely insane. The shock of transforming into the horror the PCs see—the "reward" Thanatos gave her for her loyal service—has unhinged Kaze's mind.

In addition to her insanity, Kaze has also retreated into drunkenness, a problem she successfully staved off in the outer world. Her conversation is as disjointed as her awareness. One moment she treats the PCs as intruders in her home; the next, they are her honored guests; then she treats them as her pupils in the art of magic; and then as vermin to be exterminated. All the while, her arms wave drunkenly, hypnotically.

If the player characters engage her in conversation before battle, try to keep them off balance with Kaze's constant non sequiturs: "Is that the wind? Nay, a ghost of a memory of a scent. What lovely amulets! Those who wear black, you know, must die. How lovely the moon."

But like the Blood Brethren, Kaze still enjoys gloating. She is enjoined from speaking the name of her patron Immortal, but she can still congratulate herself on her role in the grand scheme of "the Eldest One" (Thanatos). She can provide exposition that the PCs should have uncovered by now, as well as the following clues that become important in later chapters.

The vanished Immortals: "Do you hope for help from the great Immortals?" Kaze asks. "How simple it was for the Eldest to dispatch them. They are beyond mortal reach, at the headwaters of the Emerald River. Despair! You cannot hope to find them."

The Emerald River: "Do you draw that pretty picture so you can reach the Emerald River? Phaugh! You are no more than children! You are there already. All the yantra would do is set you adrift in the River, easy prey for the vortices. A kinder fate awaits you here in this dome."

The miniature figures: "Here I reign supreme, as the Eldest reigns supreme over all humanity. My tiny figures learn to fear me as I feared—well—



enough. I rule them. Kaze, the All-Powerful! Kaze, the —" Her voice cracks, and her arms weave impotently. "Kaze the many-armed, Kaze the terrifying, the mortal—And you will join my legions! Haaraah!" With the cry, she attacks.

Kaze thrills to command her tiny, immobile army, but the feeling is tinged with neurotic bitterness. She recognizes that she herself, now that she is transformed, will never attain Immortality. But she intends to transform the PCs, so that she can be like unto an Immortal to them.

Kaze Attacks

For Kaze's abilities and statistics, see the Appendix. In this battle, she fights to the death.

Kaze in her Dakka form can attack with all eight arms in each round. Her long swords each require two hands to wield. With two arms free, she casts spells as a 25th level magic-user; note that she can attack with the weapons while spellcasting, but she cannot cast more than one spell per round.

She uses her ability to change size to great effect, growing small every time she sustains serious

damage, then fleeing to the shadowy upper reaches of the dome and *healing* herself. She flies back down in small form, then grows large instantly behind the PC who last injured her. She attacks from surprise on 1-4 on 1d6.

Optionally, Kaze can also speak the word that restores a shrunken figurine to full size. Usually she picks an animal and enlarges it from a safe distance, as the restored victim always hates her. By choosing elephants, tigers, horses, and the like, Kaze creates diversions to occupy the PCs. The animals chosen are left to you.

Though this sounds like insuperable opposition for a mid-level party, the PCs have several fortunate advantages.

Defeating Kaze: First, Kaze is completely insane. Rather than destroying the PCs with ranged spells, she prefers to engage them hand-to-hand (-to-hand!). This is, to her, a demonstration of valor worthy of the Immortals.

Playing on her insanity, or her drunkenness, the PCs can goad Kaze into rash moves. For instance, by taunting her monstrous appearance, they provoke her berserk rage, so that she attacks anything

in her path to the taunter—including the invulnerable steel pillars, a waste of effort. And if the PCs produce Treesblood (real or illusory), this distracts the thirsty Kaze, reducing her to AC 9 until hit.

Kaze may waste a round or more during the battle by attempting to shrink a fallen PC while arrogantly ignoring those who are still active.

Finally, the avatar of Dakka has a special vulnerable spot on each arm. (It amused Thanatos to arrange it so; this is a trait of Dakka in Shahjapuri legends, as Chatterjee can tell the PCs.) The limb's vulnerable spot is visible as a tiny freckle. The character who tries to hit the freckle automatically loses initiative for that round and attacks at a -4 penalty. A hit inflicts normal damage and paralyzes that limb for the rest of the combat. Once all eight arms are paralyzed, Kaze hysterically attempts to bite until defeated.

Restoring shrunken characters: The *oak-in-acorn* enchantment can be dispelled normally, but the PCs can restore their small comrades more easily by speaking the command word of restoration. Chatterjee knows a general-purpose word from Shahjapuri folklore that brings back the PCs. However, the other victims require a different word. After the events of the next two chapters, the Immortals can restore any shrunken victims.

Restored NPC victims recall nothing of their ordeal and have amnesia extending several hours before they were shrunk. None have been harmed by being shrunk.

If Kaze wins: If no PC remains conscious and full-size, Kaze moves toward Chatterjee. But the old guru completes the yantra without the PCs' help, through tremendous spiritual effort. Kaze destroys him—but she and the PCs are transported to the Emerald River as described below.

There, outside the dome's influence, they resume full size and consciousness. Meanwhile, Kaze grows bewildered and flees to fetch Thanatos. The chapter proceeds as written.

Completing the Yantra

During the combat, Chatterjee tries to complete the yantra ceremony. Build tension as the battle endangers both the old guru and the diagram. The outcome, though, should allow the ceremony to finish at a dramatic moment, as follows:

The yantra's lines of powdered bone turn into lines of pure green light. A strong wind blows around you. For a moment you feel like you've been here before. And then you have the same feeling again, and again: a sense of *deja vu* multiplied. You've lived this instant a hundred times before. . .

The same moment flips past over and over, like a deck of cards riffled in front of you that always shows the same card. You try to speak,

and you begin the same word a dozen times.

But in every repetition, the yantra's green light grows brighter and brighter, until. . .

The spell is complete. The effect depends on how you choose to send the PCs into the Emerald River. See below and in the next chapter for details.

If Chatterjee or the yantra is injured during the battle, the damage triggers the spell prematurely, throwing all the combatants into the Emerald River "accidentally." (Leave the players to wonder how they would have entered had the characters completed the yantra successfully.)

WHERE NEXT?

The PCs suddenly recall the enigmatic dream from Chapter 2, and they understand how the yantra lets them contact the Immortals: by taking them directly to the Immortals' realm, the time stream—the Emerald River! But what does that feel and look like? See the next chapter.

Are They Ready to Go?

If you intend to play HWA1 or HWA2 but haven't completed them yet, the yantra works differently. The next chapters describe the climax of the entire trilogy. Before they can go on, the PCs must wrap up the plotlines from the other two adventures first.

Until they do so, the yantra simply doesn't work yet. Nothing happens in the ceremony. Chatterjee divines a magical interference, either from the sun or from deep beneath the ground (or both), locating the source in either the Azcan or Nithian Empire.

You have two options. In the first, more time-consuming option, the PCs must take a ship back to Colima, a journey of some weeks, or fly back as feathered serpents, which takes three or four days. From there they continue with HWA1 or HWA2.

A second option calls for an Immortal plot device, an enchantment that some prescient Immortal laid upon the Temple for just such an occasion: the yantra instantly *teleports* the entire group of PCs to a site near the beginning of the appropriate module. This plot convenience speeds the adventure along.

One recommended way to increase the pace: Make the yantra works on a time-delay basis. That is, as soon as the PCs dispose of the interference preventing it from working, the yantra then transports them to the Emerald River. That way, the PCs need not make the tedious return journey to Dharsatra and re-enact the yantra ceremony. (Give them a little time to prepare before you throw them into the time-stream, though!)

HOW THEY GET HERE

How should the PCs transcend their own plane and enter the Emerald River? Choose your approach according to the effect you want.

If you want to speed the adventure along, the PCs notice that the dome appears subtly larger; they see a doorway, outlined with bright green light. The archway seems to lie just around a corner—yet there are no corners in this dome! Even so, the PCs can go “around the corner” into the higher dimension and enter the Emerald River.

In a more theatrical approach, the floating dome might rocket upward from the Temple toward the Hollow World’s central sun. The sun, usually a pinpoint gate to the Sphere of Energy, now becomes a gateway to the Emerald River. The PCs feel themselves burn up in the red sunlight; their bodies explode with the pressure of their boiling fluids; and they awaken intact in the Emerald River.

THE SCENE

The Emerald River is the time stream, the meta-space through which this plane and the entire multiverse flows. It is undetectable by mortal beings, who perceive their movement through this realm as the passing of time.

Those using Shahjapuri disciplines can see the time stream via the yantra. Thus it is, to them, an “Emerald River,” an idea important to Sindian mythology and magic. The effect the yantra creates is given below. A different, non-Shahjapuri spell would produce a different sight. The “true” appearance of the time-stream, insofar as that means anything, is quite far beyond any mortal’s perceptions.

When the PCs leave the Temple’s floating dome, by whatever means, read this aloud:

You feel the same: you’re in your own bodies, and you’re wearing and carrying what you had before. But all else around you is different.

You’re outside the floating dome of the Temple of Eight Sweet Winds. This is still Dharsatra. You see crowded streets, and the Hollow World’s patchwork sky. People are crowding around the Temple, pointing upward toward the dome in panic as though something had happened to it. But except for the dome, the whole scene looks flat, two-dimensional, like colored shadows moving on a screen. You and the dome are floating “in front of” the city, in a deep green nothingness.

Everything you see in front of you—people, things, even the ground—looks like it’s surging forward toward you. But it never gets any closer. Everything except the dome is leaving a long stream of color behind it, like an infinite series of duplicates.

You see a man walk by, “across the screen” you might say. . . and in his path he leaves a stream of duplicates, in a long tube shaped like him. A crowd of people leaves tubes that intertwine and rebound from each other as the people move forward. Even things that stand still leave duplicates; they recede away from you into a scrambled mass of color. You hear sounds, but the sounds are muffled, as though by a blanket. You can’t smell anything.

You haven’t moved, and the flat screen of images hasn’t come any closer. Yet all these ongoing paths remind you of the current of a gently flowing river.

Looking Around

Give the players time to absorb all this. If they hazard a guess that their characters are seeing the world as it moves through time, confirm this. Tell them anything they need to know to help them visualize this strange realm.

The PCs can see each other. They appear to float in green emptiness. Each character is always directly facing a “screen” (that is, the leading edge of the present moment as it leaves the past behind). When the character moves, the screen effect shifts to the new angle; always, the effect is of the scene ahead flowing straight toward the viewer.

It doesn’t matter if the PCs are looking in different directions; the yantra’s effect is subjective for each viewer. The different views need not be reconciled.

Also, the PCs cannot see further than they ordinarily could, nor through objects they couldn’t ordinarily see through. So they cannot see the outer world.

Side and rear views: But no matter how the character is facing, the side and rear views over the shoulder look the same. To the side, a hazy, deep green nothingness like the Astral or Ethereal Planes.

Behind the PCs, an odd, uneven terrain stretches vertically above and below them, like a relief map set on end. Looking over their shoulders, the PCs perceive its color as an *absence* of color, a negative space, different from the nothingness between it and the bright world screen in front of the PCs.

Unknown to the PCs, this is the *vampire sheath* that holds the Immortal, Asterius, prisoner. If they try to reach the *sheath*, their early attempts fail. When they turn around to face it, it simply moves with them to remain behind. Tell persistent players to wait until you have described the rest of the scene. You want them to forget about the *sheath* until later in this chapter.

The dome: The yantra has also affected the floating dome, so the structure does not produce the same effect as buildings still within the time

flow. The dome has vanished from normal sight, creating the panic the PCs noticed above.

The PCs can re-enter the dome normally, but they cannot return it to the time stream. Fortunately, its absence from Dharsatra produces intense prayer within the Temple, but no riots or calamity.

If the PCs examine the dome, read this aloud:

Suddenly you notice a new feature of the dome: a strange, bright object sticking out from the point on top. It's a thin rod about a hundred feet high. With the onion-shaped dome under it, the rod looks exactly like a buoy, a floating channel marker of the type you see in many harbors.

The buoy leaves no trail of duplicates behind it, unlike the objects around it.

This is actually the Immortals' time marker, the device that they use to mark their return to the time-stream. The device doesn't really look like a buoy, of course; it appears this way to the PCs because of the yantra's enchantment, which translates their surroundings into something their mortal senses can comprehend.

There are no duplicates of the marker because Thanatos has enchanted the marker to stretch time around it. In the months since the Immortals left for the past, this marker has experienced the passage of only a moment.

Nothing the PCs do can affect the marker. *Detect magic* indicates that this must be Immortal magic.

NPCs: Chatterjee simply withdraws into meditation upon the immensity of this dimension. If the Beggar King or other NPCs accompanied the PCs here, they retreat inside the dome and refuse to come out. If forced out, they refuse to explore or be useful.

Leaving the Emerald River: They can't. The PCs are stuck here until the events of the climax are played out. The only way out is temporary, via a time vortex (see below).

Staging note: Stress the screen's hugeness and the depths of the green river. Play up the unusual higher-dimensional movement illusions (described below). This should be a transcendent experience for the PCs, an amazing culmination to a long adventure. And it's not over yet!

INVESTIGATION

Moving

Since the PCs are in the midst of the Emerald River, everything appears chaotic. But they can move around to get a better perspective—at astonishing speeds!

The PCs are not standing on a solid surface, yet by the yantra's magic, they can move freely as

though using a *fly* spell. They can enter the "screen" and journey across the Hollow World. The land's perspective shifts dizzily beneath them as they cross gulfs of distance at unheard-of speeds.

Restrictions: The PCs remain in the present—that is, at the head of the flow along the Emerald River. They are not travelling through time, but (as it were) beside it. Also, the PCs can affect each other and Chatterjee, but they cannot interact with anyone or anything that was not in the original yantra enchantment. Treat them as being in astral form, though they move much faster than they could in the Astral Plane.

Note, though, that the PCs cannot penetrate the *World-Shield*. The yantra's magic won't let the PCs return to the outer world.

Awareness

With their new perspective, everything still seems to be rushing toward the PCs at the head of a receding series of duplicates. The PCs have no movement restrictions; they can pass through solid objects, even down into the ground, so they might see dinosaur skeletons, great annelids tunneling, and Schattentalen caverns. Should one PC draw away from the others, the others see the moving character remain vivid and distinct, without an attached tube of duplicates.

How fast are they moving? The speed of thought seems to be the only limit. The characters can spot a distant point, and at once (as long as it doesn't pass through the *World-Shield*), they are there. This can lead to an interesting tour of the Hollow World, as described below.

However, you don't have to let the characters reach an area that you haven't mapped or developed yet. The yantra's magic can have a certain range, a preferred direction of influence, or just unknowable restrictions that keep the PCs in the areas you prefer.

Empathy: As soon as a character brushes up against any particular person's "life-tube," the PC has a sudden empathic sensation of that person's perceptions and circumstances. Optionally, you can use this phenomenon to convey many of the scenes from the Hollow World cultures that the PCs have not yet visited.

Time vortices: These palpable but invisible chrono-storms occasionally sweep the PCs (temporarily) back down into the time stream at some new location. There they see and interact normally. This provides an excuse to run any number of small fill-in adventures using some of the cultures in the Hollow World boxed set.

For example, a vortex might throw the PCs among the Icevale Elves or the Gentle Folk, for an hour or a day—just long enough to run a mini-scenario or whatever you feel like showing them. These side trips have no effect on this adventure. They are just a practical way to use material in the



boxed set that otherwise might be difficult to fit into your campaign.

Once the side trips are over, the PCs get swept back up into the time stream, at the same instant they left it, and this adventure continues.

A Goal

After the vortex mini-scenarios, provoke the players' curiosity about the huge, misshapen barrier their characters see behind them. The immense terrain, though visible behind the PCs no matter where they are in the Hollow World, seems to be centered on and above the Temple's floating dome and the Immortal time marker.

Rolling hills, crooked crevasses, sudden angular points and shallow jagged creases—this is hardly an ordinary landscape. An ethereal wind blows over these colorless folds in space, creating a thin, distant whining. Whereas everything else in this realm appears to flow forward toward the PCs, this sheet of terrain seems to recede from them as they approach—the only object in this dimension that does so.

As mentioned above, this is the *vampire sheath* holding the life force of the Immortal Asterius.

Thanatos has trapped him here to reduce Asterius's interference with the Entropy Immortal's scheme. The odd shape is the sheath's conformity to Asterius's colossal body. (Remember, everything the PCs perceive is filtered through the yantra's enchantment. This is not the Immortal's true form, though it comes closer than any the PCs might have seen before.)

The *vampire sheath* saps its captive's power as soon as he tries to use it. For more about the sheath's workings and why it appears to recede, see the Appendix.

The sheath is the only conspicuous landscape feature in the Emerald River. If the players don't realize this is their goal, Asterius can send a powerful dream-vision calling the PCs here.

Approaching the sheath: Because the sheath exists in a still higher dimensional space, the characters must make Wisdom checks to figure out how to approach it. The greater the margin of success, the more easily the character learns the conceptual shift that allows movement toward the sheath. Successful characters can help their less wise fellows learn the proper technique, so that all the PCs can approach the sheath at once.

If everyone fails the check, Chatterjee can instruct the PCs, or they can simply move backward until they touch the sheath. Upon contact, they penetrate the sheath as though it did not exist. (Technically it doesn't, except in relation to Asterius.) Moving beyond this barrier, the PCs witness the undisguised life force of an Immortal.

EVENTS

Visions in the Sheath

There is a low crackling sound as you pierce the barrier, and you think of thin silk tearing. Beyond, you see pure white light so bright it blinds you—and even after you're blinded, somehow you still see it. It stretches into the distance in all directions.

There is nothing here except the light. But you feel much more than you see. You feel you're being watched, being analyzed down to your bones. It's like something is riffling through your mind and casually examining your deepest secrets. After all you've seen, this frightens you more than you can bear. You turn to run, but there is nowhere to go. The barrier is gone.

A voice sounds in your mind, the voice you use to think your own thoughts. It says, "I am Asterius, who has guided you on the long journey here. You have done well, but the end is not achieved. The worlds you know, beneath the sky and within the core, remain in peril.

"Those who protect this plane have gone into the past, lured away by guile and treachery, lured by the Eldest One of all our number: Thanatos!"

This should be the first time in the trilogy that the PCs hear Thanatos named. Asterius seldom speaks the name, and he warns the PCs against it, too, for fear of attracting the Entropy Immortal's attention.

Asterius can briefly answer questions, and he can tell the PCs about the time marker and the sheath. The PCs are helpless to destroy either of these Immortal magicks.

"These devices, the sheath that traps me and the marker that delays the return of my fellows, are beyond your power to influence. . . even beyond my power. Yet there is hope.

"Take a part of my power," says Asterius. "You can escape this prison, for it is not tuned to your spirits. Do not think to engage Thanatos, for he is as far beyond even my strength as I am beyond yours. Rather, go back to the headwaters of the Emerald River, alert the Immortals there, and bring them back. They will foil him. But quickly! Your mortal forms can-

not contain my power for long."

He doesn't ask your permission; that's not the Immortal way. Suddenly you feel like you're jerked out of your body, and you see it floating below you like a tiny insect. Then you sense a huge version of yourself floating overhead, looking down on you as you are looking down at your smaller self. And there is a larger you above that one, and a smaller you below, in an infinite series. . . you feel your mind dissolving. . .

And then you are outside the sheath. The light is gone, you think—but then you realize it's inside you.

New Visions

The PCs, now gifted (temporarily!) with the power of the Immortals, have been transformed. At first they look like weirdly enlarged, distorted versions of their former selves, all doughy lumps and webs of protoplasm. The newly empowered PCs can restore their appearances with a successful Wisdom check.

The greater the check's margin of success, the more control the character has over his or her appearance. A great success means the character can modify his or her appearance at will (such PCs can also restore their fellow PCs who fail the check.)

The *vampire sheath* now appears small and withered, since much of Asterius's power has passed to the PCs. But the sheath and the time marker remain indestructible, for Thanatos's power is still far greater than the PCs'. Now, though, they can perceive Asterius's words through the sheath. He whispers, "Now you must learn control of the power, or it will control you. Practice. Make haste!"

The PCs should look around. To their new senses, the look of the Emerald River has changed drastically:

You're floating high above a beautiful green river that stretches away on either side of you, into infinity. The current just beneath you is turbulent and unpredictable. Behind that frontier, however, each rivulet is fixed and unmoving, as though made of glass.

This is the time stream: The present moment is under you, and behind that lies the history of all places, of everything that has ever been. If you could slice across the river, the cross-section would be the entire universe at one moment of time.

Overhead, as distant as the stars, you see bright threads of light stretching across a brilliant green void. Each of those threads is another universe like this one, but even now you don't have the power to reach them.

Beneath you, you see your own little pebble

of existence flowing through the current—one little world, small as a coin. You can pick out little life-paths on that dot, the lives of individual people and creatures. You can sense what they are and where they've been.

And what about the future? You try to look ahead of the river's flow, but it's all misty gray. The river is flowing, and you realize you can change its course.

IMMORTAL POWER

In game terms, the PCs' temporary Immortality is superior to 36th level. Theoretically, they can cast any spell they like, regardless of character class, and can *teleport* without restriction in the present. They always succeed in saving throws against mortal attacks and heal all damage just by taking a round to think about it—in theory, anyway.

However, the PCs face several limits:

- **Time limit:** Their bodies cannot withstand this power for long. When they use Immortal-level magic, they immediately have an episode of grogginess, intense pain, overwhelming fear, or similar crippling effect. Their eyes glow white, and for a moment their skin bulges painfully, as though something within them is hammering to get out.

Make it clear to the players that their characters can't last long like this.

- **Lack of control:** The PCs have the power, but not the experience to control it. When they do anything within their ordinary mortal power and character class, there is no restriction, and success is automatic. But when trying something of mortal power, but outside character class (for instance, when a fighter tries to cast a spell), a character must succeed in a Wisdom check to use the ability.

A successful attempt to use Immortal-level power requires a Wisdom check at -4 (or even greater penalties, depending on the size of the task). A failed check means the character undergoes an episode of grogginess, fear, or pain, as described above.

- **Movement:** The PCs have too little understanding of the multiverse to travel inter-dimensionally, and of space to leave this world. They are confined to this plane and (optionally) to this world. However, within those bounds they can move at the speed of thought.
- **Subjects of influence:** Let the players have fun sending their characters around the Hollow World, showing off their new power in small ways. They can bestow wealth on old friends, toy with hated enemies, and smash monsters. However, significant deeds, such as murdering an evil emperor or reshaping a continent, create painful episodes of the type described above.

Also, the PCs lack the ability to change the past. When they travel back in history, they can only experience history, not alter it. See the next chapter for details.

- **XP awards:** While they have Immortal power, the characters collect *no* experience points, except for those you award for clever thinking and good role-playing. Their power renders the PCs superior to all mortal opposition, so the risk required to win XP is missing. The only foe that can threaten them is Thanatos.

And speaking of Thanatos. . .

Approaching Oblivion

Give the players time to have fun with their characters' new power. If you like, let them make drastic changes to the world; the real Immortals can always fix the damage at the end of this adventure (see Chapter 10, Aftermath). In particular, the PCs may revisit the sites of the recent "time vortex" mini-scenarios, so they can tie up loose ends and pulverize hated enemies.

Remember, though, that the more Immortal-level power the PCs exert, the more drastic are the side effects. What's more, though they cannot know it, powerful exertions attract the attention of Thanatos. When the PCs have done one or more deeds of monumental scale (preferably one apiece), or when they decide to travel back in history, bring their practice to a close with the following:

This is great! You're seeing everything in the Hollow World like a shelf of books in a case, or a gallery of paintings. This must be what it's like to be an Immortal: to know you can reach down on anything you dislike and, poof, it's gone. You feel like doing some of that now. . .

There's a sharp noise, which surprises you since the sounds you've heard here were muted. It sounds like the clang of sword against sword, and under that the low, sibilant whisper of a dying breath. Then comes the crack of breaking bones, and a howl like the wind off a forest fire.

You sense a huge, invisible presence floating across the Emerald River toward you.

Within his sheath, Asterius warns you, "Flee! To the past! It is Thanatos!"

WHERE NEXT?

In the next chapter, the PCs retreat into the past, with Thanatos himself in pursuit.

In the very hazy far distance, the river's course seems to narrow, by a trick of perspective, to a single point. This is the beginning of time, the headwaters of the Emerald River.

In this chapter the characters, gifted for the moment with high-Immortal power, must journey up the Emerald River toward the earliest history of the Hollow World. Meanwhile, Thanatos pursues them.

A confrontation with the decoyed Immortals ends with the flight of Thanatos into a dangerous alternate dimension, with the player characters in hot pursuit. The chapter concludes with a final battle in which Thanatos will be either captured or finally escaped.

HOW THEY GET HERE

Troubleshooting: If the characters decide to stand and fight Thanatos, try to make clear how foolish this is. Thanatos turns visible, looming over them like the night sky. The Immortal reaches them and says in a quiet, hoarse voice, "You should never have left your happy time-bound life. I shall make you suffer in ways that stretch your comprehension."

Thanatos brooks no discussion or threats—and, it need hardly be added, the PCs cannot harm him. If they still stand their ground (or their space, above the river), he makes good his threat.

Thanatos cannot destroy the characters at once. They are Immortal, if only for the moment, and it takes much time and forethought to kill an Immortal. He will first trap the loudest player's character in a *vampire sheath*. This takes one round, giving the other characters a chance to flee. Asterius prompts them: "Your only refuge is the past. When he gets too close, hide within time. And go back, back, to find our allies!"

Thanatos traps one more PC each round until they finally get the message. When the survivors fly up the Emerald River into the past, read the following:

The Emerald River stretches away before you. You're flying into the past with the speed of thought—but these are distances, and spans of time, that your thoughts cannot comprehend. In the extreme distance, at the headwaters of the river, you make out what seem to be mountains. But you know somehow that these must be the Immortals.

You travel easily into the past, as if you're flying over a rolling meadow. Your speed increases with each second, if that idea means anything here. You wonder how much history you're covering.

Behind you, the invisible presence of Thanatos grows visible—darker with each moment, large as the sky. He looks like dusk, with the night spreading across the sky from the horizon. You can see spots of light inside his form, colored brown and yellow. An awful smell reaches you as he approaches.

Give the players a chance to try evasion tactics, such as turning invisible, creating illusory duplicates, and so on. Even the cleverest idea can't fool Thanatos for more than a round. He closes the gap, driving the characters almost to the surface of the Emerald River. Inevitably, one falls in.

Flashbacks

This means the character experiences a scene of the Hollow World's history, a "flashback" (see the previous chapter's description of the time vortices). During the chase, the characters should experience one or more of these scenes, because they provide valuable exposition and clear up long-standing mysteries.

What's more, the characters' dips into the Emerald River temporarily throw Thanatos off the trail. He must look into that cross-section of time and search the entire Hollow World, wasting valuable seconds while the quarry experiences the flashback. Though at first the characters fall in by accident, they should soon learn to dive into the river voluntarily to evade capture. After every evasion, though, Thanatos is closer and more visible. . . .

Gaming the flashbacks: Run the scenes that follow in the order given. They occur in reverse chronological order; that is, as the characters journey farther back in history, they experience scenes that occurred earlier and earlier in time. Some scenes rely on incidents specific to your campaign. Other scenes resolve mysteries raised in the other modules of this trilogy.

Because of the characters' Immortal power, they can comprehend long stretches of history in seconds, when necessary. They can also sense background details (motives, feelings, dreams) that would not be evident to mortal senses.

Ending each flashback: The character should know when Thanatos has tracked him down. In the form of a large black raven, Thanatos flies into the scene, cawing, aiming straight for the PC(s). No matter how incongruous the setting, the raven always appears (usually as soon as you have given the necessary exposition for that scene).

The PCs should flee back out of the time stream and resume the flight back in history. If anyone stays to fight, Thanatos seizes the foolish PC, lifts him out into the time stream, and encases him in a *vampire sheath*.

Here are the suggested scenes. Feel free to drop or amend these, or to add new scenes.

1. Exposition

Use the first scenes to fill any gaps in the players' understanding of recent events. For instance, if you played HWA1, show the early incidents in the Blood Brethren's resurrection and seizure of the goblin princes, and their journey into the Hollow World (see p. 18 of HWA1, *What Really Happened Here*.)

Also, players of HWA2 should appreciate glimpses of the great annelids burrowing through the *World-Shield*, with patrols of Schattenalfen moving behind them to collect their valuable ore castings. The newly Immortal PCs may sense the dream-sendings that the Schattenalfen thought were from the Immortal Atzanteotl; the characters realize that these were in fact from Thanatos, who wished to conceal his own involvement.

As they recognize this, the raven appears, meaning Thanatos has found them. The chase continues.

2. Nostalgia

After you have filled in gaps of exposition, distract the players from Thanatos's gradual approach, using flashbacks of incidents from their characters' own early careers. The Immortal PCs should not be able to change their history, but they might gain new insights into old events. Characters with mysterious origins might see the truth of their beginnings now, in a transcendent moment of realization. But then the raven appears, sending them on. . . .

3. Sightseeing

Now Thanatos looms as high as the sky's zenith and his sinister laughter echoes in the characters' ears. But scenes from the history of various Hollow World cultures give insights into the places the characters have already seen, and foretastes of lands they might visit later. The history in the *HOLLOW WORLD™* Sourcebook timeline (pp. 10-17) may offer inspiration. These culminate in the fifth flashback sequence, below.

4. The Brethren Mystery Solved (Optional)

If you have played the other parts of this trilogy, describe the scenes from the background of the Blood Brethren that explain their creation. Consider splitting up these scenes among several PC observers, if convenient. This should be easy, since Thanatos is so close that nearly every PC must dive for cover at the nearest spot in the River!

This, you sense, is over 200 years in the past, outside the Nithian Empire's capital city of Tarthis.

You see the Brethren, two thin, twisted goblin figures, climbing into the mouth of a great annelid. It's as big as a cavern, and they look ragged and tired, but they seem to be in full control of it. Behind them come the sounds of an angry mob. Nithians by the dozen are chasing the Brethren, armed with torches, wands, and rods.

The annelid closes its mouth, swallowing the Brethren. You sense them inside, safe in suspended animation. As the mob comes into view, the giant worm slithers away into a tunnel. You sense, with your new awareness, that it

will tunnel toward the outer world. In Nithia, the angry citizens will smash monuments, deface inscriptions, and remove almost every trace of evidence that the Brethren ever lived here.

Beyond that, your awareness grows less clear; but you realize that these Brethren will safely reach the Broken Lands and rule its goblins as tyrants, starting a dynasty that reaches down to Prince Kano and Prince Udan in your own time. The Brethren themselves won't see it; a band of adventurers will finally trap their spirits under Barleycorn Monastery.

Another dive out of the time stream, and a rapid plunge back into it, just a few years up the line:

The Brethren are making major trouble throughout the Nithian Empire. You see pyramids scarred with their monograms, innocent citizens turning into silhouettes and vanishing, and great Pharaoh himself bowing to the Brethren as they sit on the twin thrones in the Royal Palace.

In the shadows behind the thrones, an elderly wizard in white robes is looking up at the Brethren nervously. You sense that he's thinking back on an ancient experiment gone wrong—the creation of the monsters called gnolls. The Nithians created them as servants, but the servants rebelled. This wizard, named Socaris, is mumbling to himself, "Would that I had learned from my forefathers' mistake."

Once more Thanatos drives you out of the time stream, and in evading him you dodge high into the emptiness above him, then twist around and dive down, far back in the stream, many years before the last time.

The Nithian sorcerer that you saw before is stooped over a crucible in a dark, smelly alchemist's laboratory. He seems to be torturing a pair of goblins. Sensing more deeply, you realize he's transforming them into the Brethren.

A dark figure stands behind the sorcerer, instructing him. "As the magical energy flows from me to you," it says, "so let that energy flow into these insensible forms. When you are through, they will command magic beyond reason, as your obedient servants." The figure looks like another Nithian wizard—to mortal eyes, that is. With your new senses, you detect the aura of power around him. This is Thanatos himself!

As you realize this, he turns to stare right at you. Before your eyes, he transforms into a huge black raven! Thanatos chases you back out of the time stream, and the pursuit continues.

This, then, is the solution of the mystery raised in the previous modules. The Brethren, created by Nithian sorcery as were the gnolls before them, caused havoc in Nithia until rebellious citizens drove them out. (In fact the Immortal Rathanos, alarmed at the Brethren's corruption of Nithia, temporarily allowed the populace to overthrow the tyrants.)

As Thanatos inspired the creation of the Brethren, so he arranged their escape from the Hollow World. Using one of his newly awakened annelids, Thanatos guided the Brethren to the outer world, where they started their new career of tyranny. (The rest of their history is recounted in HWA1.)

5. The Spell of Preservation

By now, the PCs are moving back through millennia with every minute. Though Thanatos is breathing foul breath on their necks, the PCs have reached the origin of the *Spell of Preservation*.

The surface of the Emerald River is like a sea of green glass. There are a few ripples, here and there, but they don't move. You dip down below the surface to escape a particularly close swipe from Thanatos, and you're hit with a strong vision:

Centuries of war—of brutal slaughter. "Brutal" is right; it's the tribes of Brute-Men, the savages of the polar wastes. In this time they live all over the Known World. The great annelids and other monsters, even worse, lived beneath them.

New civilizations rise. The Brute-Men are pushed back, their numbers dwindling. Then you feel the new order, sweeping around you like a wind: the Immortals pluck forth some of the doomed creatures and transport them into a new land sealed with mighty protective magic. The new arrivals would flourish like orchids in a hot-house.

The raven appears behind you, gigantic, and you sweep back out of the time-stream and over the Emerald River. High up, you see the dividing line: Before you, further back in history before the *Spell*, the Emerald River is coarse, turbulent, and barren. You look behind you, past Thanatos, past the line when the *Spell* took effect. The Emerald River runs placidly, peacefully, its rivulets forming a beautiful pattern.

Rendezvous With Immortals

After that, time speeds by ever more quickly. The early history of the planet is turbulent and incomprehensible, making entry into the river impossible for the PCs. As they pick up speed, they rapidly approach the "mountain range" they saw before. These terrain features are, of course, the Immortals.

The headwaters of the Emerald River bulge in rounded curves and sprays, like a rapids fixed in one moment. Within its depths you see frozen explosions and turbulent masses of color. It looks, not merely beautiful, but awe-inspiring.

So do the figures that loom around you. Large as you are, these are like mountains: the true Immortals. You see a long dinosaur tail stretching across your field of view like a ridge of land, and behind it, a tree that reaches up as high as you want to look. And there are others. You speed toward them. . .

—And in front of you, Thanatos looms up from the river! You're going too fast to stop, and he's too large to avoid. You collide at full speed.

But you don't hit anything. His body just vanishes like black smoke, leaving you feeling dirty and smelly. You look back at what's left, and you see the real Thanatos still pursuing you. With your increased awareness, you instantly realize he sent a phantasmal duplicate of himself here to the start of time, so the other Immortals would not grow suspicious of his absence.

Before you can call the other Immortals' attention to the illusion's disappearance, the real Thanatos moves into its place, occupying it exactly. You look around; the other Immortals seem not to have noticed. And now Thanatos is spreading out, preventing your escape back into the future. What do you do?

The players should realize it's time to talk. Quickly!

THE SCENE

Before running this sequence, re-read the section on the Immortals in the Sourcebook, pp. 94-120, with attention to the Immortals' appearances and personalities.

Though their Immortal power has given them gargantuan size, the PCs are still dwarfed by the colossal forms of the true Immortals. Here in the time stream, the Immortals need not confine themselves to the little avatars they use to walk in the world; here, they wear forms more suited to their magnitude. (The yantra's enchantment is still filtering everything for the PCs, so do not assume that the forms seen here are the Immortals' original, actual bodies.)

Bring in any or all of the Immortals from the Sourcebook. Magnify their appearances in keeping with this larger-than-life setting. Here are sample descriptions of a few major Immortals—the four most closely involved with the history of the Hollow World:

Ka the Preserver: Chief guardian of the Hollow

World, this Greater Immortal of Matter now looks like an amber-colored saurus of cosmic proportions—like Old Olin (from Chapter 1) *magnified to city size*. His alert reptilian eyes occasionally seem to pop out and scrutinize individual PCs.

Ixion: The Ultimate Immortal of Energy appears as a huge golden disk as bright as the sun, spoked like a wheel. When it turns to face the PCs, they can see a face. To each observer, the face's features are those of a male from the observer's own race—a human sees a handsome human face, a dwarf sees a dwarf, and so on. But in all cases, the eyes are flaming yellow.

Ordana: This Greater Immortal of Time seems to be a vast oak tree beyond the horizon, miles tall, with beautiful branches reaching far along the horizon. Green light from the river highlights the branches from below.

Korotiku: Most insightful thinker of the Sphere of Thought, this Greater Immortal appears as a spider's silhouette, thin as a shadow, stretching beneath the PCs across the face of the Emerald River. (Now and then—preferably just after a dramatic moment—he moves one segmented leg beneath a PC and playfully bumps the character upward. He tries this on Thanatos, too, but the leg never reaches close enough to touch).

Add other Immortals as you wish. Any Immortals that you would rather not deal with are out of sight within the time-stream itself, investigating scenes from the early history of this dimension.

As for the Emerald River, assume for convenience that the PCs lack the ability to enter it here. If you want them to enter it, the universe at that early stage of existence is little more than a huge, nebulous ball of energy, with only a few scattered pockets of order and intelligence (the first Immortals, including Thanatos). Nothing relevant to the adventure happens here.

EVENTS

Staging notes: Try to convey the grandeur, the size, and the immense power of the Immortals. They fear nothing, except, perhaps, Thanatos.

Aside from formalities such as granting clerical spells, the Immortals pay no attention to individual mortals in most circumstances, any more than the characters would pay attention to an individual ant in an anthill. But right now the PCs have Immortal power, so the Immortals must attend to their words—for the moment.

Blowing the Whistle

No doubt the characters try to tell the Immortals about Thanatos's plot. Imagine their surprise when, no matter what they attempt to say, the first words out of their mouths are, "We are visitors to this plane. We heard of your investigations here at the dawn of existence, and we

thought to join you."

The crafty Thanatos is interfering with the characters' message, using subtle, word-twisting Immortal magic. The enchantment takes the words from their mouths and transforms them en route to the other Immortals.

The spell shows every sign of working: Ka the Preserver says, "Welcome, fellows of the Unending." ("The Unending" is one of the names the Immortals use for themselves.) "We are glad to have visitors. One of our number, Thanatos, has told us of great evils that arose in this era and lay dormant until our own; we hope to learn about them. Cast forth your awareness as you will."

The players must use cleverness to circumvent Thanatos. For instance, their characters can create illusions of themselves speaking the words they want to say. Other methods also work, if they sound practical. Or, if the players aren't clever, Korotiku or another Immortal can see through his tactics.

Once the Entropy Immortal's trick is exposed, the characters can speak their piece. The Immortals soon stop them, saying, "Hold. Let us read your auras." A moment of silent concentration, and the Immortals have learned every detail. They all sweep back to the present, with the PCs in tow.

Thanatos Escapes

Back in the present, floating above the Emerald River with the time marker glowing brightly beneath them, the Immortals free Asterius from the *vampire sheath*, but they do not yet retrieve his power from the PCs. The characters should feel by now that the power is starting to break loose from their bodies. But the Immortals take no time to control that power; instead, they will directly confront Thanatos.

"So, Eldest," says Ka, "in this you have passed far beyond your usual worm-like gnawing at the edges of Order. Strong as you are, we are all massed against you, a power that even you cannot long withstand. Have you anything to say before punishment?"

"Yes," Thanatos responds quietly. "Having pressing business elsewhere, I regretfully decline the engagement. Follow me, those who dare!" With that, his shadowy form distorts, twists like a tornado, and funnels down into a glowing oval that appears from nowhere—a *gate* of some kind. It hangs in the emptiness after he departs.

Following Thanatos: The other Immortals recognize the portal and are aghast. "Nightstorm!" they cry. "He cannot be so desperate!"

Almost as one, the Immortals turn to the PCs. "Listen closely," the weakened Asterius tells them. "There are realms where even the Immortals fear to go. The nature of law in those dimensions is such that our power evaporates, leaving only a husk behind. Thanatos has chosen such a refuge, thinking to discourage our pursuit. He gambles

that his great power will let him survive long enough to make his way to safety on his home plane.

"We cannot follow. But you, mortals, can make the journey safely and survive there with your own abilities. Within Nightstorm, you can briefly face Thanatos as one of your own. Will you try to defeat him and return him here? Choose quickly; moments count!" The gate to Nightstorm is starting to evaporate.

Give the players only ten or 15 seconds of real time to make their decision. If they refuse, go to "Where Next?" below. Presumably, though, they accept; they should have built up too great a grudge against Thanatos to let him get away!

Nightstorm!

Once the PCs consent, Ka the Preserver instantly creates a dimensional transport device, a small wand that he hands to the group's leader. "This will return you and Thanatos here, should you succeed." Meanwhile, the other Immortals are bathing the PCs in power, strengthening them still more. "Against the remnants of the Eldest's power, you will need it all," they say.

Passage through the portal is easy enough, though slightly disorienting. Beyond it. . .

You're tossed in a rift of stormy darkness, yet your vision is unimpaired. The gulfs above and below flash with lights that explode in stark and frozen color. In the distance you see lurid bands of darkness that swirl through the void, splitting and merging like wind-tossed waves. There's a smell of candle wax on a cold wind.

You also spot huge wavering translucent spheres in the air, wobbly mirror-like bubbles that appear from nowhere in an instant, then vanish. One appears not far away; it makes the hair of your arms prickle, like lightning about to strike. You feel a wave of weakness and pain, but it passes as the bubble snaps taut and bursts. Half of your Immortal power is gone!

Large concentrations of magical power create these bubbles. A single bubble can drain half the magic from all characters in the vicinity, so powerful characters lose magic much more quickly than weaker ones. For more about the bubbles, see the next subsection.

Thanatos is hovering not far away, apparently trying to create another dimensional gateway. He looks different, a flickering shadow, pulsating malignantly. He looks much smaller, too, hardly larger than your worst nightmare, and he seems to be having trouble making the portal.

But when he notices you, he speaks with the same quiet confidence. "So they send children for the labors they could not face themselves? Typical." He laughs and goes back to his spellcasting.

The Battle

Nightstorm has indeed reduced Thanatos's power immensely, though not permanently. He had much to lose, and so it went quickly. The PCs, who had a small degree of Immortal power themselves, are losing it more slowly, and are actually not much weaker than Thanatos himself.

For playability, you can adjust the characters' Immortal power against Thanatos as you desire. In the battle, the characters use their own mortal abilities, statistics, and saving throws without adjustment. For the much weakened Thanatos, use the statistics for the Average Manifestation Form given in the Immortals section of the *HOLLOW WORLD™ DM's Sourcebook*, p. 96; make the following changes, which are caused by the peculiar nature of this realm:

- Thanatos has no *Anti-Magic* here, and is not immune to mortal magic. He can be hit with any weapon or spell, but all mortal attacks do minimum damage. Only an artifact does normal damage, and the characters probably don't have one!

If reduced to 0 hp, Thanatos does not die, but he also doesn't disappear back to his home plane. His indestructible body goes inert, allowing the PCs to carry it back to the Immortals for their just retribution.

If a player character drops to 0 hp, the PC does not die either. The body explodes as described below under "Where Next?" The character returns with the other demolished characters at the start of the next chapter.

- Neither the characters nor Thanatos can *teleport* in this dimension. They can only cross to other planes after a lengthy spellcasting process; the PCs have caught Thanatos in the middle of his attempt.

Thanatos continues to create the gate to his home plane while he battles the PCs. Once the gate is complete, he will escape and seal the portal behind him. This takes 12 rounds minus the number of characters in the battle; for instance, if there are seven characters, Thanatos needs only five rounds before the gate is finished.

(In this Manifestation Form, Thanatos is treated as a 36th level magic-user. Consider him to have a score of 18 in all abilities and to know all skills. If you don't have the Master Rules, Thanatos has a saving throw of 2 vs. all special attacks.)

Fighting Thanatos: The Entropy Immortal hardly thinks the PCs much threat to start with,

which may save their lives. He also doesn't bother to finish off a weakened opponent; as soon as a target takes extensive damage, Thanatos shifts the attack elsewhere. This reflects his tendency to toy with fallen foes, and his reverence for subtlety over brute force.

The energy-draining bubbles may also rescue a character or two. These appear every 1d6 rounds or as you need them. When a bubble appears, every character must make a saving throw vs. Spell at -4. (Thanatos needs a 6 or better to succeed.) Successful characters are unaffected. Those who fail the saving throw lose half their current hit points (minimum 10 hp).

A character can predict when and where the bubble will appear next by meditating, doing nothing else for one round. A meditating character can defend and make saving throws normally, but cannot attack. Thanatos can also meditate this way, even though he is casting his *gate* spell; but he cannot attack on the round he does so. Anyone who predicts where the bubble will appear can evade its draining power automatically (no saving throw needed), and with trickery or clever tactics can even lure an opponent into its range.

Use the bubbles to even up the battle when necessary, preferably against Thanatos, in order to increase the players' excitement and fun. Thanatos should miss a saving throw automatically if it improves the adventure.

Ending the battle: The characters probably can't defeat Thanatos. This encounter is more a way to let the players blow off some steam and get in some vengeful blows against the villain who has caused them such trouble. Show him moaning with pain, cursing the characters, and wondering (perhaps with growing panic) how these mortals can damage him, as no entity has damaged him in cons. This should give the players some satisfaction, even as he finally departs.

However, if they do well against him, Thanatos tries to break off the battle and bribe the characters. He knows their innermost hearts and motives, and he can promise anything with the smoothness of a master liar. This, too, serves more a dramatic than a practical purpose. The players, unlikely to be swayed by his blandishments, feel nobler for refusing them. (If anyone does accept Thanatos's bribe, he creates the desired item or effect on the spot. Then Thanatos escapes, and the bribe disappears.)

If Thanatos defeats all the PCs, he leaves without destroying them. That happens shortly anyway, and the tactic would show no subtlety. If he fights them off long enough to finish his *gate*, he steps through with these parting words:

"For now, you may draw satisfaction that you have fought me, as no other entity has in the life of your civilization. But think on this: I am older than the stars in your sky. I know ways to torment you that you cannot conceive. And I am patient.

Rest uneasy, heroes, for I shall have my revenge."

With that (and probably with the characters' own taunts ringing in his ears), Thanatos steps through the gate and is gone, leaving only a smell of carrion behind.

WHERE NEXT?

If Thanatos has escaped, the PCs must use Ka the Preserver's wand to return to the Emerald River. If none of them are conscious, the wand triggers automatically, returning them safely. If they have lost the wand, allow the characters to use their last vestiges of Immortal magic to make the return trip.

The characters are feeling very bad now. Pain courses through them, beyond their power to heal. They have just enough time to gasp out a brief account of the battle to the Immortals; they probably ask for help and healing as well, but the Immortals wish to know more details before they do so. Play up the continuing agony as they make the request. Stage this as a down-to-the-wire finish, building suspense before (the players think) you actually allow them to heal.

In fact, it's too late. In a surprising finish, the power proves too much for the characters' fragile mortal forms. The Immortals can do nothing. With the last vestiges of their Immortal awareness, the characters sense themselves enlarging, distending, burning from the inside out—and, at last, exploding in a series of brilliant fire balls, like fireworks!

But it's not over yet! Go to the next chapter.



HOW THEY GET HERE

The PCs awaken—intact, healed of damage, and restored to their normal mortal condition—on the slopes below the ruins of Atacalpa, where they began the adventure in HWA1 (or the cliffs above Colima, if you are playing this module alone). The Immortals of the previous chapter *commune* freely with them, speedily wrapping up this adventure.

LOOSE ENDS

Irila Kaze and the Kirtanta

If Irila Kaze survived, Asterius finds her, restores her to her human form, and returns her to Glantri (or charges the PCs to do so). Kaze is now totally insane and evidently powerless, so she finishes her days in one of the nightmarish Glantrian asylums for the ill. (You may wish to bring her back as a “mad wizard” in a later adventure.)

The Immortals deal far more harshly with the Kirtanta, who subverted the symbolism of the Temple in Dharsatra. The Immortals (especially the Twelve Watchers, who helped design the Temple) transform the Kirtanta, one and all, into true doppelgangers, and scatter them across the Hollow World. The former assassins retain no abilities or memory of their previous existence. . . but they do retain a propensity for impersonating the leading members of the societies they discover.

The Blood Brethren

If you have not played the other modules in this trilogy, skip this section.

Presumably the PCs defeated both Simm of the Grasping Dark and Koresh Teyd, and destroyed both the Smoking Mirror and Nightrage foundry, in HWA1 and HWA2. If either of the Brethren escaped, the Immortals track them down and—then what?

The Time Immortal Rafiel might confine the Brethren again in Barleycorn Monastery; remove them to another plane, to serve Thanatos forever; or even set them loose again on the outer world! To the Immortals, the Brethren are agents of Entropy, necessary to the cosmic balance. Having seen the balance in their trip up the Emerald River, the PCs may find this hard to dispute. In any case, although the Immortals don’t want the Brethren in the Hollow World interfering with the *Spell of Preservation*, they won’t simply destroy the Brethren. That is a job for PCs.

This means the Brethren, if they survived the previous adventures, can return to bedevil the PCs in future adventures.

The Great Annelids

If you have not played HWA2, skip this section. HWA2 raised a serious problem: the tunnels

that the giant wormlike great annelids made through the *World-Shield*. The Immortals look upon this with great severity. After all, millennia ago, the burrowers were the main reason the Immortals created the *Spell of Preservation*!

If the PCs alert the Immortals to the problem, Ka the Preserver agrees to hunt down the annelids and put them back to sleep. Repairing the *World-Shield* is tricky, even for Immortals; but Ka volunteers to take on the job. He won’t rest until, somehow, he can fix the damage.

Meanwhile, a couple of small annelids may still be active here and there. And for the time being, there are plenty of ready-made tunnels connecting the Outer and Hollow Worlds. This offers prime possibilities for future adventures.

Corruption from the Smoking Mirror

If you have not played HWA1, skip this section.

In HWA1, large sections of the Hollow World became corrupted by strange radiation from the *Smoking Mirror*. This corruption heals naturally once the mirror is gone (and if the PCs failed to destroy it, the Immortals Ilsundal, Ixion, and Pflarr do). The corruption’s after-effects are felt only in certain areas, and for only a few years at most—like a single breath to the Immortals, not worth the trouble of correcting.

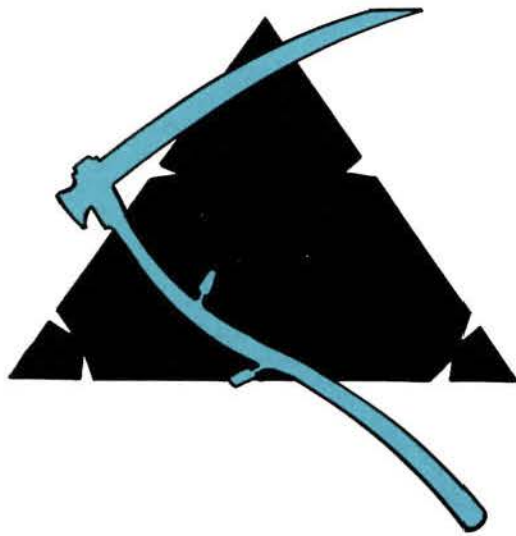
When you run Hollow World adventures in your own nations, the PCs may encounter certain after-effects of the *Smoking Mirror*, such as ruthless exploitation of the landscape or peculiar individuals who seem little affected by the *Spell of Preservation*. However, none of the territories described in the HOLLOW WORLD™ boxed set sustain any damage of this kind; the corruption did not take root there.

Friends and Enemies

Colima: If the PCs plead for the Colimans, the Energy Immortal Tarastia gladly strengthens this small port by placing a special guardian. (“It’s only just,” she says.) In the future, the town can prosper, suffering less from Merry Pirate raids and Azcan war parties.

Dael the shepherd: Dael helped the PCs at the start of HWA2, despite the curse of the *ring of truthfulness* he wears. If the PCs ask, any lawful Immortal casually removes the curse.

The feathered serpents and elementals from HWA2: The Immortal Ixion restores the feathered serpents’ Ashmorain hatching ground intact; his fellow Immortal Rathanos transports Koresh Teyd’s captive fire and earth elementals back to their respective Elemental Planes. If you desire, Ixion can adjust the abilities of the feathered serpents and their natural enemies, the flying vipers, so that the serpents flourish once more in the Hollow World.



GETTING HOME

Ka the Preserver, perhaps uneasy at the intrusion of the outer world into his beloved preserve, gives the PCs a one-charge *jump rod* (see “For New Players” in the Introduction). They can *teleport* without error directly to Barleycorn Monastery (or their last position on the outer world).

The Caravan

Use this sequence if you played HWA1.

Asterius retrieves the shrunken caravan from the Temple of Eight Sweet Winds, and he gives PC magic-users the command word to enlarge it. The PCs can easily carry the whole shrunken caravan in a single bag; the enlarged version would be difficult to transport!

Once they reach the Outer World, the PCs can carry the caravan back to Glantri City (or wherever they started) and collect the reward. The war between Glantri and the tribes of High Gobliny has been raging since the PCs left—perhaps weeks, perhaps months. After much bloodshed, both sides are entertaining second thoughts, and conditions are ripe for a truce. The return of the caravan encourages this truce. The grateful rulers of Glantri increase the promised 15,000 gp reward by another 5,000 gp. (Adjust the reward to your campaign standard.)

Stage the restoration of the caravan as a public spectacle in the palace court, a dramatic punchline to the adventure.

Further Rewards

In addition to the gp reward for the successful return of the caravan and the usual experience points for defeating opponents, make a bulk group XP award at least large enough to raise one player character halfway to the next level. For example, if the party includes an 8th level thief, award each PC up to 40,000 XP, half of the

80,000 the thief needs to reach 9th level.

Give 10-20% extra XP to individual players who role-played well, devised clever plans, and otherwise increased everyone’s enjoyment of the game. Adjust all XP awards to reflect your personal play style and the needs of the individual players.

Optionally, if you have the Master Rules, the PCs’ long association with the Immortals has produced great benefits. Asterius, in particular, grants each PC a *wish*, subject to the guidelines on page 10 of the Master Player’s Book. This is a strictly optional reward; don’t use it if you don’t feel comfortable giving the players such power.

Clerics who wish to follow Asterius instead of their original patron can change without level penalties—though this choice should have consequences in the campaign (the cleric’s former leaders may harass him, etc.). Other Immortals may make the same offer to PC clerics, if you wish.

—OR STAYING

Perhaps the PCs want to stay in the Hollow World. Ka the Preserver at first commands them otherwise. “Your presence here would endanger this preserve,” he says.

Encourage the players to protest. If they sound persuasive, Korotiku the Trickster intervenes. “Come, come, O Great-Tail Long-Tooth,” he says, “how else may the lands we preserve here gain new legends? These younglings look the type to make some, I should say. Watching them should be fun.”

Ka relents, but he gives them the one-charge *jump rod* mentioned in the previous section. “This will return you home at once. Feel free to use it.” Ka neglects to mention that it’s a one-way trip!

That business done, the Immortals wish the PCs good adventuring, then they rocket upward and are lost in the red noon. The PCs are left alone, on the shore of a new ocean, with all the lands of history spread out around and above them like fresh fruit ready for tasting.



IRILA KAZE

As human: Female, height 5'4", weight 120 lbs., age 59. Thin; long full white hair, blue eyes, alert look; immaculate wizard's robes.

As avatar of Dakka: As above, but six extra arms with clawlike fingernails; longer torso; dirty uncombed hair; crazed look; filthy Shahjapuri clothing. Carries two black two-handed swords without scabbards.

Irila Kaze made excellent impressions early in her studies at Glantri's Great School of Magic. By her late teens her command of magic was such that she appeared likely to graduate and directly enter the civil service at a high level. Irila showed spirit, originality, and a consuming curiosity.

But that curiosity led her into independent searches in the school library. Wheedling favors from a friendly but unwise library guard, Irila ventured into an area of the library normally off-limits to everyone: the Night Collection. She felt the lure of its sinister tomes, many written by inhuman hands, some mumbling and chuckling to themselves as they sat on their shelves. Irila opened one at random; that led to another, and another. . . and Irila Kaze gradually changed.

From then on, she still achieved fair success in magic, but no longer exceptional breakthroughs—that her instructor knew of, at any rate. In fact, she made enormous progress in secret, guided by a profound supernatural intelligence. For in a nation where worship was outlawed, Kaze had become a worshipper of the most evil of Immortals: Thanatos.

Thanatos eventually enlisted Kaze in his subtle plot. She lured the two goblin princes into place, allowing the Blood Brethren to possess them, then journeyed with them to the Hollow World. She separated from them and journeyed to Shahjapur, where Thanatos has "rewarded" her with a new body. She commands the Kirtanta assassins, who follow her fanatically as the "Black Mother," the incarnation of Chaos. With the assassins, Kaze guards the time marker in the Temple of Eight Sweet Winds.

Driven insane by her transformation, Kaze has turned to alcohol, including the Treesblood liqueur to which she was already addicted. Now she commands the Kirtanta to bring her living victims from the streets of Dharsatra; she shrinks them with *powder of oak-in-acorn* (see below) and pretends that they are her worshippers. Kaze knows, but refuses to admit, that her transformation has left her unable to continue on the path to Immortality.

Abilities: As Dakka, Kaze can attack with weapons ordinarily prohibited to magic-users. In one round she can attack with her two two-handed

swords (one on each side), and she uses two more hands to gesture in a spell. The remaining two hands can grapple, seize and hold objects, or strangle, though the last counts as one of her three attacks per round.

Thanatos has also given Kaze an ability that Dakka has in Shahjapuri legends, the power to shrink to the size of a fly. Changing size takes Kaze no time, but she can do nothing else on the round she changes size. (However, sudden "appearances" before startled PCs may give her an initiative bonus on the next round.)

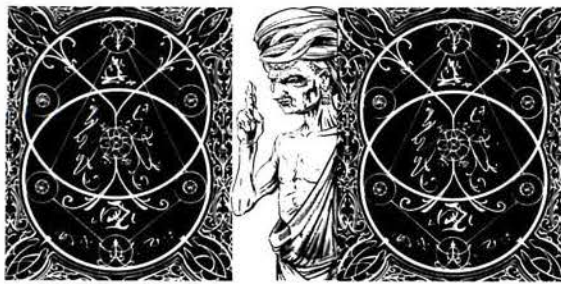
At small size Kaze can fly as per the spell. Her AC becomes -2, but she cannot attack with weapons. She can cast spells normally; however, the mad Kaze seldom casts spells while small, as it robs her of the feeling of supremacy she craves. She uses her shrinking power only to evade an attack or escape from a trap.

Powder of oak-in-acorn: Kaze wears a necklace made of vials of this shrinking powder. Most of the vials are now empty; there is one full vial for each PC, and each vial holds enough powder to shrink one PC. Kaze prefers this powder above all other attacks, but the victim must be motionless for it to work. So when she has overcome an opponent, she may stop and try to shrink the victim, even when others are still attacking.

Irila Kaze/Dakka: 25th level magic-user; AC 7 (incl Dex bonus); hp 50; #AT 2 weapon/1 spell; Dmg 1d10 + 2/1d10 + 2/by spell; MV 120' (40'), Fl 240' (80'); Save M25; ML 12; AL C; THAC0 9 (Str bonus). Str 16, Int 17, Wis 12, Dex 16, Con 12, Cha 15.

Kaze's Spells

1st level	<i>darkness</i> (x2), <i>detect magic</i> , <i>magic missile</i> , <i>read languages</i> , <i>read magic</i> , <i>sleep</i>
2nd level	<i>continual darkness</i> (x2), <i>detect good</i> , <i>knock</i> , <i>levitate</i> , <i>phantasmal force</i> , <i>web</i>
3rd level	<i>dispel magic</i> (x2), <i>fire ball</i> , <i>lightning bolt</i> (x2), <i>protection from normal missiles</i>
4th level	<i>polymorph others</i> (x2), <i>polymorph self</i> , <i>curse</i> , <i>wall of fire</i> , <i>wizard eye</i>
5th level	<i>cloudkill</i> , <i>dissolve</i> , <i>pass-wall</i> , <i>telekinesis</i> , <i>wall of stone</i>
6th level	<i>anti-magic shell</i> , <i>disintegrate</i> , <i>projected image</i> , <i>flesh to stone</i> , <i>stone to flesh</i> , <i>wall of iron</i>
7th level	<i>magic door</i> , <i>power word stun</i> , <i>reverse gravity</i> , <i>sword</i>
8th level	<i>clone</i> , <i>dance</i> , <i>force field</i> , <i>polymorph any object</i>
9th level	<i>meteor swarm</i> , <i>heal</i> , <i>shapechange</i>



CHATTERJEE

Appearance: Wearing only a clean white loincloth, this thin, apparently middle-aged samdu radiates peaceful commitment and trustworthiness. His hair is silver, long, and braided. Like most Shahjapuris, his eyes are brown.

Background: Chatterjee was born to wealthy parents of the priest caste. As a young man, he studied widely in philosophy and the arts before taking up a career as a wizard. His talent and perseverance caused him to rise quickly to great power (the equivalent of 10th level).

One day while laying flowers before Ganetra's statue, Chatterjee saw a samdu in the northeast doorway vanish into thin air! Moments later, the holy man reappeared with a look of profound wisdom and enlightenment in his eyes. Moved by this amazing experience—remember, there are no *invisibility* or *teleport* spells in the Hollow World—Chatterjee became the *chela* (student) of the holy man, the guru Dhala Bho.

Chatterjee learned disciplines of diet and exercise that extended his youth. (Despite his appearance and obvious good health, he is nearly 80.) He learned to give up material possessions, such as his fortune and his spell books. Abandoning the ways of magic, he learned the Path of the Eight Virtues.

Dhala Bho left Dharsatra and is now traveling through Shahjapur spreading his teachings. (He does not appear in this adventure, unless you need a substitute or replacement for Chatterjee.) In his absence, Chatterjee experienced strange dreams. These dreams warned that the dome was no longer a place where one could *commune* with the Immortals, but instead was occupied by an evil being. The dreams told him to seek the Immortals “on the Emerald River” and to wait for the arrival of foreigners. Since then, his meditations have revealed a way to reach the Immortals: the Yantra of the Emerald River.

DM Note: Chatterjee has long since lost the ability to learn new spells or even read magic. But if the party needs help in a tight battle, Chatterjee might remember some spell memorized decades ago and cast it for his or the party's well being. Stage this for maximum surprise or even comic effect.

Chatterjee: AC 9; hp 13; #AT Nil; Dmg Nil; MV 120' (40'); Save M10; ML 11; AL L; THAC0 Nil. Spells carried: None, except as plot requires.

THE KIRTANTA

Kirtanta advance as thieves in THAC0, hit dice, and saving throws. They can climb, hide in shadows, and strike from behind like normal thieves. However, they lack the thief's ability to pick pockets, open locks, read languages, or cast spells from magic-user scrolls. They have other special abilities that compensate for these lacks.

Only males are allowed to join the Kirtanta.

At 1st level, a Kirtanta learns Ramasi, the secret language of the society; the use of the Kirtantese garrote; and the “silent language.”

The garrote: The Kirtantese garrote is made on the spot from a silver piece and an ordinary-looking silk handkerchief or scarf. The silver piece is dropped in the center of the silken square. The four corners are gathered in one hand, the silk-covered silver piece in the other. A couple of quick twists, and the assassin has a stranglecord.

Kirtanta have the thief's ability to strike from behind (+4 to hit). Once the garrote is in place, the victim cannot cry out because of the pressure on his throat. The victim is allowed one Strength ability check each round to break free. If these fail, the victim suffocates and dies in four rounds. While strangling his victim, the Kirtanta loses all Dexterity bonuses to Armor Class. If the victim is freed before four rounds of strangulation, he suffers 1 hp damage per round due to bruising.

The “silent language”: This is a subtle system of gestures. If two Kirtanta whose arms and hands are free are within sight of one another, they can send simple messages invisibly to one another, even if they are both engaged in normal conversations with other people. The language works best in matters of choosing victims, killing methods, and other types of violence; it is less effective in other subjects. The silent language cannot be used during an attempt to hide in shadows.

Disguise and shapeshifting: At 5th level, a Kirtanta undergoes the “Ceremony of Mirror and Shadow.” His superiors give him a transfusion of doppelganger blood and teach him acting and disguise. The acting and disguise abilities allow him to pass undetectably as a member of any human caste or class, with a percentage chance of success equal to (80 + level).

The doppelganger blood enables him, through a painful hour-long process, to imitate another being as well as a doppelganger can. For the transformation to be complete, he must remain in the presence of his victim for a full hour. Thus a Kirtanta can become a perfect replica of anyone, even those of the other gender or other species. However, the assassin lacks the duplicate's memories and abilities.

(Doppelgangers are well paid for this “blood brotherhood.” They like the Kirtanta, and any party of five or more assassins usually includes a doppelganger ally.)

Withering weapons: At 7th level, a Kirtanta receives the silver pickaxe. This weapon in their hands acts as a *long sword* +1, but it can be easily concealed within loose clothing. The pickaxe also has certain magical abilities, but these only function for the individual for whom the axe was forged. The Kirtanta cannot use their ability to strike from behind with the pickaxe.

Once per sleep (that is, per day), the silver pickaxe can act as a *staff of withering* (as in the Expert Rules). The aging occurs during a successful hit (a saving throw vs. Wands negates the effect), and the withering occurs in addition to the damage of the blow.

At 10th level, the silver pickaxe may be used as a *staff of withering* three times per day.

A Kirtanta never draws his silver pickaxe in front of innocent bystanders, except by dire necessity. Each Kirtanta swears an oath of hatred upon his pickaxe: If he does not slay the individual he have drawn the pickaxe against, he will track that individual down and kill him, even if it takes the rest of the assassin's life.

Leadership: At 15th level, a Kirtanta confronts

the current leader. If the challenger has better stats, the leadership is invested in him and the old leader turns to dust. If the challenger has lesser stats, then he is aged to dust.

Typical Kirtanta assassin: 4th level thief; AC 5; hp 12; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4 + 1; MV 120' (40'); Save T4; ML 11 (9 without leader); AL C; THAC0 19. Carries *dagger* +1 that only works for that individual Kirtanta.

Kirtanta assassin leader: 7th level thief; AC 5; hp 22; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 + 1 + special; MV 120' (40'); Save T7; ML 12; AL C; THAC0 17. Carries dagger and silver pickaxe, which works (for leader only) as *long sword* +1 and, once per day, a *staff of withering*.

Kirtanta master: 10th level thief; AC 4 (Dex bonus); hp 33; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 + 1 + special; MV 120' (40'); Save T10; ML 12; AL C; THAC0 14 (Dex bonus). Equipment as leader above, but pickaxe works three times a day.

Doppleganger: AC 5; HD 4; hp 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1d12; MV 90' (30'); Save F10; ML 10; AL C; THAC0 16. Immune to *sleep* and *charm*.

NEW MAGIC

VAMPIRE SHEATH

This device can only be created by Ultimate-level Immortals; Thanatos is the only Immortal known to have used it.

The *sheath* can imprison an Immortal victim. It draws on the victim's own power to trap the prisoner in a pocket dimension, accessible only through the time stream. Whenever the victim tries to exert power, the *sheath* feeds on that power and shifts the victim back a few seconds in time to the point before he or she decided to use the power. Thus the victim remains perpetually on the verge of action, without acting.

To an onlooker in the time stream, the shift backward in time makes the *sheath* appear to recede. All other objects that move forward in time appear to approach the observer, as described in Chapter 8.

Thanatos trapped the Immortal Asterius in this *sheath* shortly after the other Immortals were lured back to the headwaters of the Emerald River. Asterius, though, cleverly foiled some of the *sheath*'s restrictions. By reciting certain spells backwards, Asterius provoked the *sheath*'s movement back in time—and that, in turn, repeated the recitation of the spell forward, triggering its effects. This allowed Asterius to rescue the PCs upon their emergence in the Hollow World (in HWA1), and to send the various dream visions they experienced during the trilogy.

However, this method allowed Asterius to use only a fraction of his Immortal power, since the *sheath* absorbed most of it. So the Immortal could not help the PCs any more than he did.

POWDER OF OAK-IN-ACORN

Rare to the point of extinction in modern times, this "shrinking powder" once achieved popularity among chaotic mages. The silvery powder, made from essence of homunculus and other esoteric components, shrinks a specified target to a hundredth (or less) of its original size for an indefinite time. The magic-user using the powder can recall the target to normal size with a word. Living creatures who are shrunk fall into stasis, neither aging or deteriorating until recalled to normal size. Objects of any size can be shrunk, but larger objects require more powder.

Powder of oak-in-acorn is found (when found at all) in a sealed one-ounce copper vial, a quantity sufficient to shrink a large man to beetle size. Trying to prepare an ounce of powder requires Alchemist skill at the +2 level, takes two weeks, and costs 4,000 gp. The caster must spend a full round sprinkling the powder in a complete circle around the target while doing nothing else. Unwilling targets receive a saving throw vs. Spell to resist being shrunk. The effect can be countered by a *dispel magic* spell.



GANETRA GOLEM

Armor Class:	0
Hit Dice:	24** (120 hp)
Move:	90' (30')
Attacks:	3 (fist/fist/trunk squeeze) + special
Damage:	2d6/2d6/3d6
No. Appearing:	Unique
Save As:	F12
Morale:	12
Treasure Type:	Nil
Alignment:	Chaotic
THAC0:	4
XP Value:	8750

With the help of Thanatos, Irila Kaze enchanted this huge, elephant-headed figure, a statue in the Temple of Eight Sweet Winds. The statue represents the legendary Shahjapuri Immortal called Ganetra, the incarnation of Knowledge. Its stone is an unusual dark green form of jasper, finely and reverently polished.

Like most golems, the Ganetra golem is immune to non-magical attacks, poisons, gasses, and *sleep*, *charm*, and *hold* spells. It reflects *lightning bolts* back toward the caster, but other magical attacks such as fire and ice do normal damage. Normal fire does not affect it.

This golem has two special attacks. Once every three rounds, its trunk can sound a blast equivalent to a *horn of blasting*. This creates a 100' long, 20' wide cone of effect that inflicts 2d6 damage and deafens for one turn those who fail to save vs. Spell (see Expert Rules). It cannot blast while squeezing a victim or making any other attack.

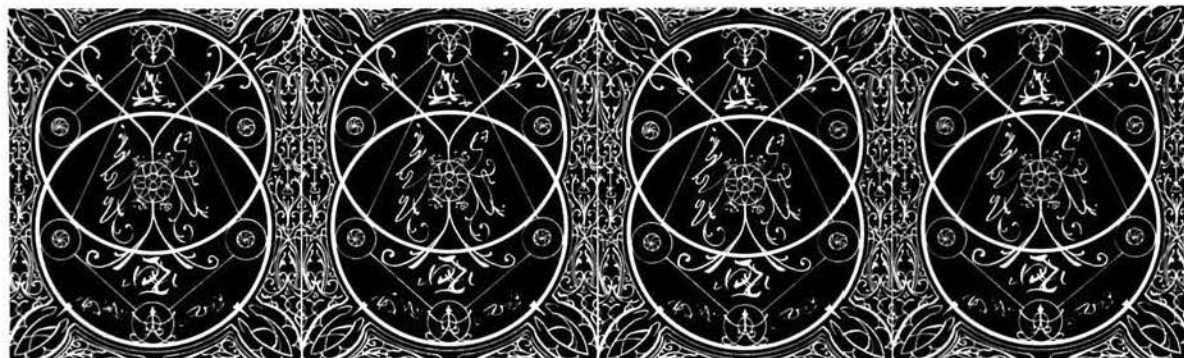
The second special attack is a sort of magical radiation. Persons who come in contact with the statue (including those making a successful hit with a hand-held weapon) must save vs. Spell or be *slowed* for 1d6 + 1 rounds. This does not affect those using missile weapons, ranged spells, or other ranged attacks.



If the golem makes a successful hit with its trunk attack, it can continue squeezing automatically in later rounds. The victim must make a successful Strength check at -6 in order to break free. Success means the character breaks free and can act normally that round. Failure means the victim takes further squeezing damage and cannot do anything else that round.

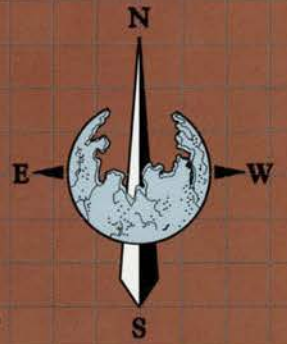
The Ganetra golem fears hostile magic. If the golem has a victim in its trunk when attacked by a ranged spell within 120', the golem throws its victim at the caster (normal range penalties apply). The victim takes 1d6 points of damage. The spellcaster, if hit, takes the same damage.

The golem is well-balanced and does not trip easily. However, its great weight (two tons) may cause it to crash through wooden bridges or into pit traps.



GREATER COLIMA

150 Feet



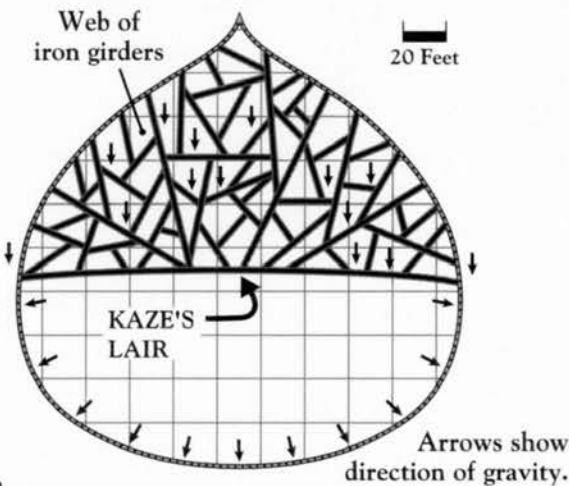
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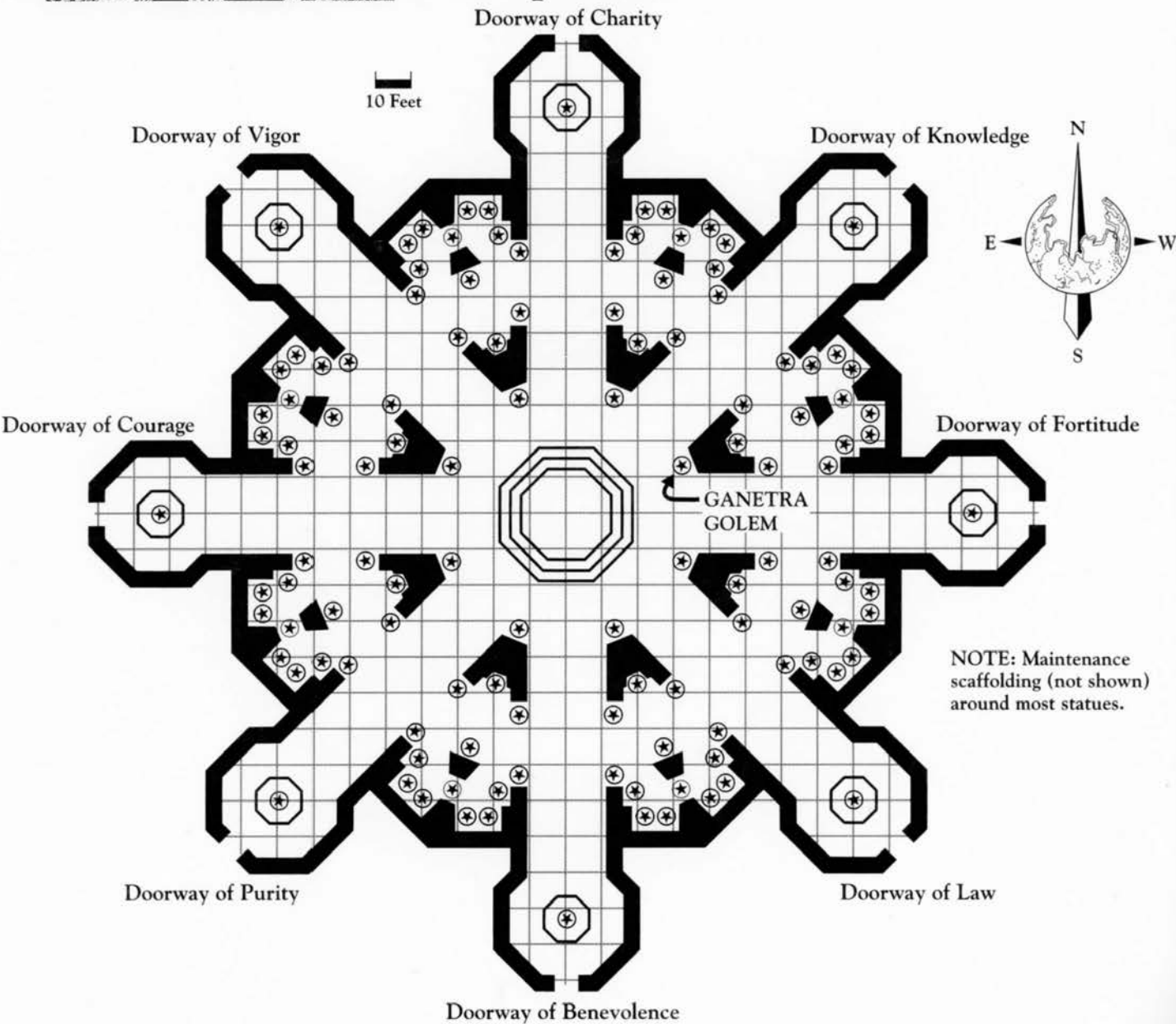
THE TEMPLE of EIGHT SWEET WINDS



Floating Dome (Interior)



Temple Floor



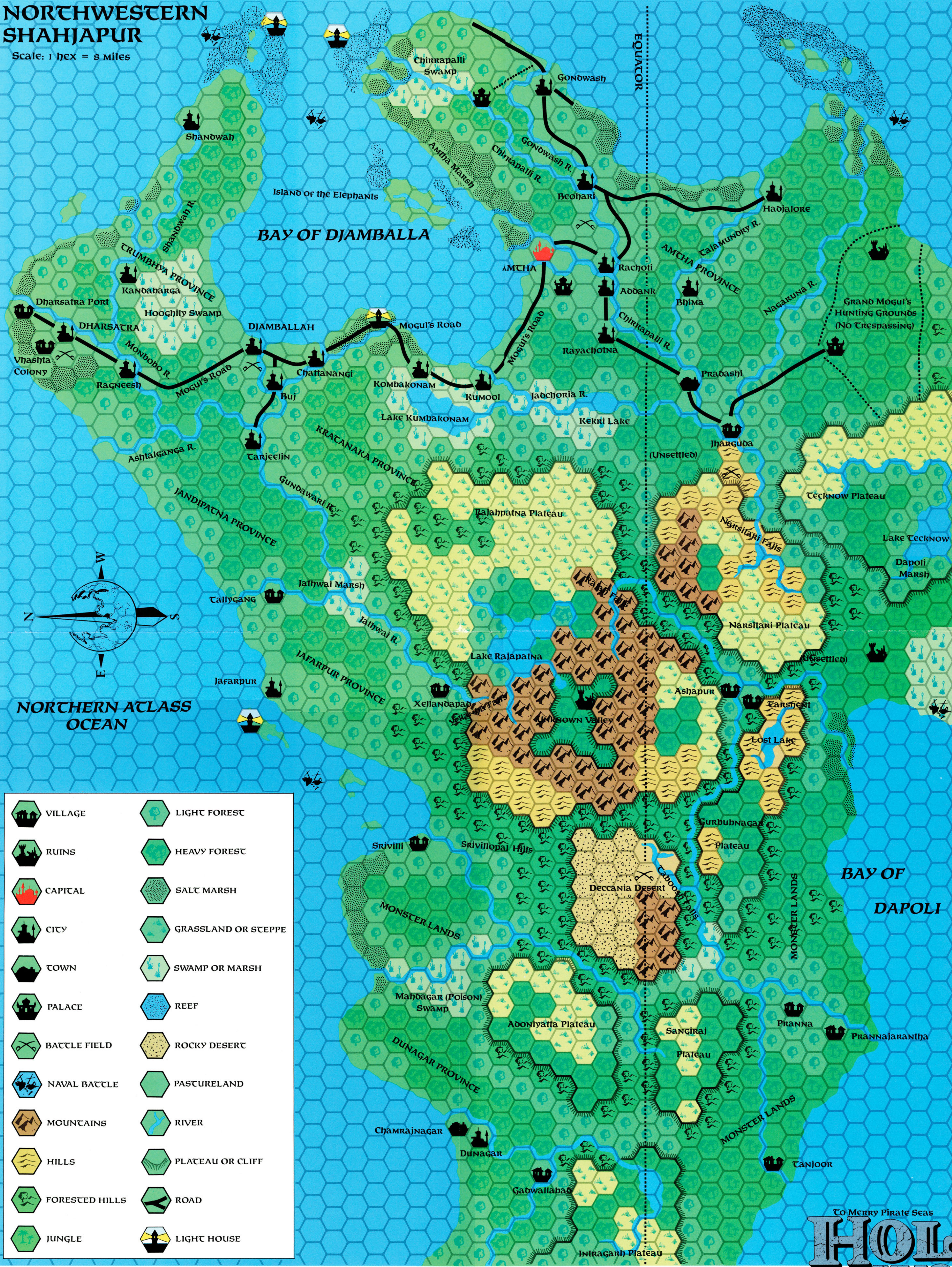
MONSTER SUMMARY TABLE

This table presents vital statistics for some of the MONSTERS featured in this adventure. Refer to the various D&D® rulebooks or the appendix to this module for more detailed information.

Name	AC	HD	hp	THACo	#AC	DMG	MV	AL	Remarks
Amravati	9	C3	10	19	1	1d4	60' (20')	L	detect evil, cure light wounds
Allosaurus	4	16	75	7	2 or 1	2d8/2d8 + pin or 3d8	210' (70')	N	save vs. paralysis or pinned
Beggar King	8	F4	28	17	1	1d6	60' (20')	N	move reduced due to bulk
Chatterjee	9	—	13	Nil	Nil	Nil	120' (40')	L	save as M10
Cobra	7	1*	3	18	1	1d3 + poison	90' (30')	N	save vs poison or die in 1d10 rounds
Cobra, white	6	2*	15	18	1	1d4 + poison	90' (30')	N	save vs poison or die in 1d10 rounds
Dakka — see "Kaze, Irila"									
Doppelganger	5	4	20	16	1	1d12	90' (30')	C	immune to sleep and charm spells
Devil swine	3/9	9*	25	10	1	2d6 or weapon	180' (60')	C	hit by silver or magical weapons only
Flying vipers	6	2*	8	16 (18 spit)	1	1d6 (1d4 spit)	Fl 300' (100')	C	save vs. poison for half damage, spit range 30'
Ganetra Golem	0	24**	120	4	3	2d6/2d6/3d 6	90' (30')	C	save as F12, horn of blasting, slows, squeeze; see New Monsters
Kaze, Irila	7	M25	50	9	2 weapons /1 spell	1d10 + 2/1d10 + 2 /by spell	120' (40'), Fl 240' (80')	C	size change, shrinking powder
Kirtanta									
Common	5	T4	12	19	1	1d4 + 1	120' (40')	C	garotte, silent language
Leader	5	T7	22	17	1	1d6 + 1	120' (40')	C	shapeshift, withering 1/day
Master	4	T10	33	15	1	1d6 + 1	120' (40')	C	pickaxe + 1, withering 3/day
Merry Pirates									
Marines	6	H2	8	19	1	1d6	120' (40')	N	halflings
Sailors	7	H1	8	19	1	1d6	120' (40')	N	halflings
Rowers	9	H1	8	19	1	1d6	120' (40')	N	halflings
Captain	4	H5	28	17	1	1d8 or 1d6	120' (40')	N	ring of spell turning, potion of invulnerability
Mongoose	6	1	7	19	1	1d6	180' (60')	N	+3 vs snakes
Shahjapuri									
Citizen, exceptional	8	F2	12	19	1	1d8 or 1d4	120' (40')	N	administrators, officials, noteworthy citizens
Citizen, above-average	9	F1	6	19	1	1d4	120' (40')	N	artisans, merchants
Citizen, typical	8	NH	3	20	1	1d2	120' (40')	N	normal human; workers, untouchables
Guard	5	F2	12	19	1	1d8 + 1	90' (30')	N	+1 to hit bonus
Guard Mage	9	M3	8	19	1	1d4	120' (40')	N	light (x2), web
Priest	9	C1	6	19	1	1d4	120' (40')	N	many of these will be unarmed
Toad, giant	7	2+2	9	17	1	1d4 + 1	90' (30')	N	—
Tree Spirit	0	10*	75	11	1	1d10	180' (60')	C	+1 or better weapons to hit, immune to sleep, charm, hold, death magic and cold-based attacks

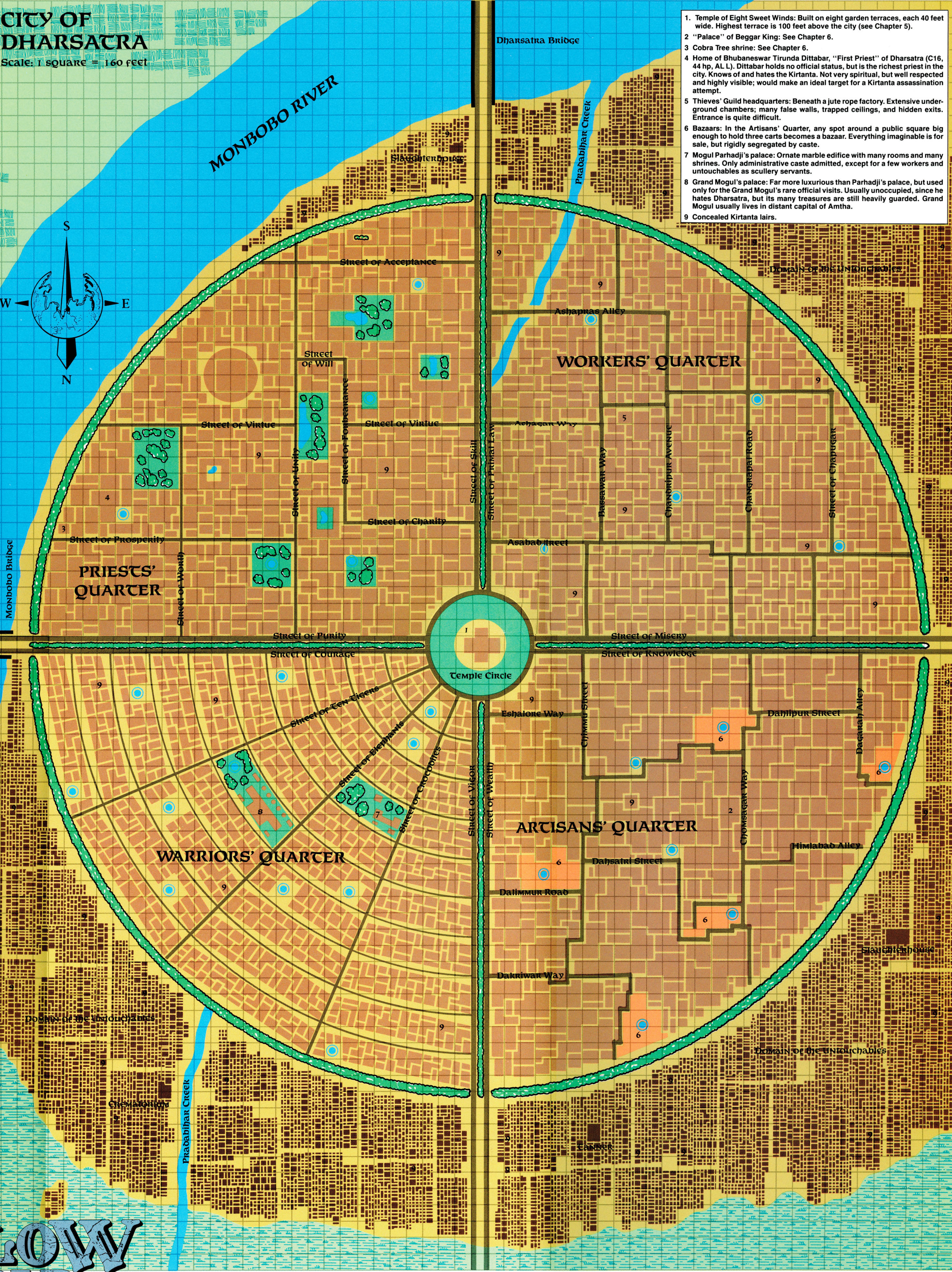
NORTHWESTERN SHAHJAPUR

Scale: 1 hex = 8 miles



CITY OF DHARSATRA

Scale: 1 square = 160 feet



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NIGHTSTORM

Third Adventure in the *Blood Brethren* Trilogy

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